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***Zero Tolerance* and Its Women: Representations of Self and Nation**

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Zero Tolerance and Its Women: Representations of Self and Nation

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Zero Tolerance and its Women: Representations of Self and the Nation.

INTRODUCTION: THE SHOW, THE CONTEXT AND THE PROJECT

This thesis is an analysis of a South African television show, *Zero Tolerance*. It explores the relationship of the show with a pervasive new South African nationalist discourse that informs media production in contemporary South Africa. In so doing it exposes the nature of this discourse and its construction of identities. The show is in some respects representative of the discourse, harnessing its signifiers and perpetuating its economy of representation. In other respects, it illustrates the contingent and individual nature of the relationship between the discourse and its products. The flow of power is never uni-directional, as Michel Foucault makes clear in "Truth and Power" (1980: 23), and so an examination of the show in light of discourse analysis will reveal both conformities and some idiosyncrasies. I have chosen to examine a television text because of the increasingly important role played by the television in the socialisation of individual subjects and because it too can be subjected to the kind of textual discourse analysis that has traditionally been the method of literature studies.

This show is engaging because of the gender stereotypes it harnesses as signifiers and because of the manner in which it both conforms with, and departs from, the rhetoric of the discourse. The female characters in *Zero Tolerance* are, while liberated from elements of patriarchal discourse, trapped within elements of the economy of race, class and gender that have determined much of South African cultural construction during the history of apartheid. The show, then, is an example of the positive aspects of the nationalist discourse in South Africa and also of its limitations and regressions. The discourse of South African nationalism, with its rainbow metaphors and its apparently ameliorative trajectory, simultaneously frees subjects and their universe of existence and silences elements of their daily lives and keeps them locked in closed subjectivities that do not allow discursive space for free individual identity construction. This analysis of the show provides insight into nationalism in post-apartheid South African public culture and its attempts, more or less successful, to forge a united South African identity.

The Show

Zero Tolerance is a weekly, hour-long South African television drama series. It portrays the lives of the members of a small unit of crime investigators, based loosely on the operations of the South African Directorate of Special Operations (the Scorpions). This is an elite investigation unit, outside

of the police, which investigates and prosecutes high-profile crimes. *Zero Tolerance*, the fictional unit for which the show is named, consists of characters which serve to exemplify a series of race, class and gender types, representative of the diversity of the South African nation – the ‘rainbow nation’. The show first aired on the public broadcaster (the South African Broadcasting Corporation: SABC) on Channel 2 (SABC 2), the predominantly Afrikaans- and Tswana-medium channel, in 2002. It was conceived and produced by Hilary and Sara Blecher – a mother and daughter team who write episodes of the show and are still producing it in conjunction with Ochre Productions for SABC 2, as the third season nears the end of its production. The show is produced in the style of hyper-realism, with camera-work, lighting, sound, mise-en-scene, scripting, acting, plotlines, characters and editing that all reference the ‘reality’ of post-apartheid South Africa and enhance the dramatic engagement of the show. In *Reading Television* John Hartley and John Fiske argue that ‘[t]he more closely a (television) signifier reproduces our common experience, our culturally determined intersubjectivity, the more realistic it appears to be’ (2003: 23). That is, all of the elements of the production of the show are stylised in such a way to create the most culturally ‘real’ experience possible. The analysis that follows, however, focuses on the *discursive* construction of the show. The construction of this discourse of representation is reliant on technical processes of construction of meaning, including the camera-work, lighting etc. mentioned above, which are not under analysis here. A film or media-studies analysis should include such a detailed analysis of the technical construction, while this cultural studies analysis takes the content of the show and not its form as its subject matter.

Zero Tolerance is set in Johannesburg and each episode deals with a crime and its investigation by the team. Occasionally an investigation spans more than one episode and in the first season a series of crimes and incidents all link to a corruption scandal related to an arms deal (a direct reference to contemporary South African affairs of the time). This, of course, goes precisely against the grain of the rainbow nation discourse, which seeks to elide the flaws of the new government. This is in favour of representations that construct the government as working towards the utopian ideal embodied in the metaphor of the rainbow nation: equality for all. Adherence to and departure from the tropes of the discourse characterise the entire show, which sets up the stereotypes that signify the new South African nationalism - and then unsettles them. The vicissitudes of the private lives of the investigators in the unit arch over the entire season. Often their personal problems and dramas link directly with the investigations and their abilities to carry them out or even more directly, the criminals, victims or witnesses are known to one of the team-members.

Each character is constructed of a (racial) South African stereotype, which is also unsettled. It was precisely this disruption of stereotypical practices that was engaging for me as a researcher. The representations set up the stereotypes along the racial schema that historically determined South African identity construction. These same representations then, along the lines of the new discourse of South African nationalism, portrayed the breaking down of these types. It is this use of the same signifiers of race, class and gender as under apartheid representation, but constructed to be in some ways opposed to the tradition of that type, that I identify as central to an understanding of the construction of the new South African discourse. This new nationalist discourse, discussed in detail in the chapter that follows, essentially works towards producing a new South African nation, made up of the same racial diversity, but understood and constructed in different terms. The characters are stereotypes of the 'old South Africa' in the sense that they are racially determined, but they do not conform with all of the traditional characteristics of those types. They are new characters with new attributes. These attributes are often stylised around rhetorics of acceptance of difference, of hybridity and newness. The complexity of these characters, then, represents a rhetorical construction of the post-apartheid nation in opposition to the apartheid nation. Life in post-apartheid South Africa is still determined by the racial schema that has historically been so powerful, but that *Zero Tolerance* interprets and represents in new ways, so as to distance the contemporary experience of race as far as possible from the historical experience. This is done in order to construct a distinct South African nation different from that of apartheid. The break with the past is limited by the continued use of the same sets of signifiers. The discourse, then, is constructed as new but not built with new blocks – it is still the same nation constituted of the same substantive content as the apartheid nation. South Africa has undergone massive socio-political change and restructuring, but its present material reality and representations cannot be seen as entirely distinct from its historical origin – indeed they exist in a dialectic relation with each other.

The Team

This description is of all of the individual characters that make up the *Zero Tolerance* team. The analysis in this thesis focuses specifically on two of the characters in the team – Denzela and Hannelie. A third character is also analysed who is not part of the investigation team but who constitutes an important element of the discursive construction at work in the show and the nationalism it articulates: Francina. She will be described in the chapter that deals specifically with analysis of her representation.

In the first season the central character is Denzela Ledwaba (played by Moshidi Motsegwa). The plot weaves together her personal life with the official life of an investigator and the season's finale climaxes with the shocking - politically motivated - murder of her husband. Denzela is the daughter of an ANC struggle hero and is socially connected to the upper echelons of the ruling ANC¹ elite of the new South Africa. Indeed, the man implicated in the corruption scandal is a close family friend. It is implied at one point that she has received her appointment to the special investigation unit because of these political connections – a situation which closely mirrors present South African perceptions and issues in the public domain. This insinuation of nepotism and corruption in the post-apartheid government goes, again, against the grain of the discourse of nationalism (discussed in detail in the chapter that follows) that would construct a flawless government working tirelessly towards the attainment of its liberation ideals. The inclusion of these kinds of realistic nuances is part of what makes this show engaging as a representation of the post-apartheid nation and also as an interrogation of it.

Denzela's character represents the stereotype of the emerging black elite of South Africa. Early in the season Denzela decides to divorce her husband and proceeds to live on her own as a single mother. She has a series of sexual affairs and is thus represented as an independent and sexually powerful woman. In this way the patriarchal neo-capitalist trope of the young black mother, supported by her husband and shopping and having manicures, is disturbed by this powerful character, who is not constricted by her femininity, but celebrates and derives great pleasure and power from it. She is not the ideal mother that a patriarchal discourse would require (and that a nationalist discourse also requires of a black woman) but she nevertheless survives and even triumphs. This freedom to experience womanhood in her own style and without any major discursive consequences signals a loosening of the representation of women in the tradition of South African representation.

Sakkie Bezuidenhout (played by Ben Kruger) is an ex-security branch police investigator. He represents the old-school Afrikaans man, with his large *bier-boep*² and his connections with policemen accused of gross human rights violations during apartheid. In a powerful scene, which symbolises the stereotypes represented by Sakkie and Denzela, the two of them are sitting in the car on a stake-out. Sakkie turns to Denzela and says: 'I won't tell you about the last time I did this' – in

¹ African National Congress

² Extended stomach grown fat from excessive consumption of beer.

the middle of a conversation about her father. The symbolism is rich as the implication is that Sakkie's history may have brought him into contact with Denzela's father – but with a very different power relations based on the racial system of oppression inherent in apartheid (racialized police and state sponsored security service brutality and violations of human rights). Last time Sakkie was on a stake-out he was investigating her father as a so-called 'terrorist' and this time the two of them are monitoring the movements of a suspected *Al-Qaeda* terrorist. Sakkie disturbs some of the tropes of the stereotype of his character by, for example, speaking English with a good English accent. He is also not a racist (which according to the traditional construction of the white, Afrikaans-speaking security branch policeman he most certainly would be expected to be) and he does not have a history of human rights violations. He is a sensitive man, in touch with his own and others' humanity (in traditional patriarchal discourse this would be a contradiction in terms) and an excellent investigator.

Hannelie De Kok (played by Rolanda Marais) is also a character that rhetorically conforms to the historical construction of a young Afrikaans woman: she is a pretty young woman, born on the *plaas*³ in the countryside, demure and soft-spoken. The radical disruption of this well-established stereotype occurs when it becomes apparent that she is homosexual, which is an Afrikaans identity hitherto entirely unrepresented on the television (and one still highly problematic for Afrikaans identity construction). The notion of homosexuality is contested in many of South Africa's (and Africa's) other cultures at least as much as in the Afrikaner culture, but this broader debate – discussed by Andrew Parker *et al* is not the focus of this paper (1992: 6). Hannelie's character is the most striking disturbance of the stereotypical figures of the South African discourse and it was with a particular interest in her character that I began my exploration of the representations in this show and their implications for the nation.

Enoch Sithole (played by Patrick Shai) is the leader of the team. He has the essential post-apartheid credentials of having a history as an anti-apartheid struggle hero, who represents the older generation of black South Africans. He is sometimes referred to as *baba*⁴ by Denzela and is cast in the stereotype of the old, wise man, leading his team and navigating their moral and political dilemmas for them. It is surprising, then, that Enoch is eventually forced to resign from the unit because of questionable sexual conduct regarded as inappropriate for a man in his position. This

³ farm

⁴ Father.

fate for Enoch is a disruption, again, of the struggle elder stereotype, which is an element that would be constructed as morally irreprehensible in the nationalist discourse and which serves to unsettle the discursive construction of the utopian post-apartheid nation.

Raks Moodley (played by Rajesh Gopie) is the Indian legal expert in the team. He represents the educated Indian middle class and has strong moral convictions regarding the investigations and the conviction of the criminals. He does not socialise with the other characters and his personal life is never of much significance to the plotlines of the show, at least until he is also forced to resign because he has bent the rules in order to secure a conviction.

Generic Influence: *Homicide: Life on the Street*

The foundational influence of the American show, *Homicide: Life on the Street* is manifest in the deployment of its conventions in *Zero Tolerance*. In 1999, during the pre-production of the show, David Simon, creator of *Homicide*, and his co-producer David Mills, were invited by Hilary and Sara Blecher to come and workshop the production of a crime drama with the team of writers and directors commissioned to produce *Zero Tolerance*. *Homicide* made a significant break from the existing cop show genre when it was released in 1993 and along the lines of Jason Mittell's in "Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory" it signalled the 'deconstruction of the genre into a discursive generic practice' (2001: 7) with a heightened quest for realism. David Kalat argues in *Homicide: Life on the Street: The Unofficial Companion* that '[f]rom its gritty and convincing realism to its cinematic, avant-garde style, this drama from acclaimed feature film director Barry Levinson announced itself as something special with its very first broadcast in January 1993' (1998: 2). The show, with its index to reality in the form of the lived experience of its creator, David Simon, made pioneering use of realism in the portrayal of the police and their lives, which, according to Ellis Cashmore's essay, 'Arresting Viewing', had traditionally been represented in a particular, highly stylized manner (1994: 167). Simon had spent 1989 researching the work and lives of a team of homicide investigators in Baltimore, which work he wrote into a compelling semi-fictionalised account in 1990: *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets: One True Year in a Big City – and the Cops Who Hunt the Killers*. This book was subsequently co-opted by the NBC television network into what has become one of the most successful and influential cop shows in the history of television. The major pioneering change brought about by Simon and his 'year on the killing streets' was a highly realistic style (Kalat: 1998: 2). His intimate knowledge not only of the crimes and the investigation processes but also of the psychological and emotional responses of the investigators to their work was the first clear break with past cop-show stylistic conventions that

influenced the production of *Zero Tolerance*. Simon's close relationships with the investigators in the Baltimore homicide unit gave him a dramatic insight into their characters and the material necessary to construct a realistic- and not comedy- or drama- or thriller-styled - representation. This was the starting point for the 'critical realism' (Cashmore: 1994: 163) that characterizes the approach to representation employed in *Zero Tolerance*, imported from *Homicide*. The generic construction, then, that is the American cop show, also mediates the representation of post-apartheid South Africa in *Zero Tolerance*. The influence of the generic conventions and tropes must be considered while thinking through the representations in a South African version of an American genre, although the adaptation of the genre in the South African context is not the focus of this paper.

Some Methodological Questions

The discursive analysis that I am undertaking of *Zero Tolerance* falls within the broad ambit of cultural studies. The *Television Studies Reader*, edited by Robert Allen and Annette Hill and published in 2004, sought to define the parameters of a relatively new field of cultural studies. It aimed to chart the various approaches to this field of study that have marked the chronology of theoretical and academic writing on the subject of television. The approaches range from structural analyses of institutions to cultural analyses of representations. It is in the variety of television-studies-approaches that my own analysis must find a methodological home. The influence of Edward Said and his methodological approach to discourse analysis, as discussed in some detail in *Orientalism* (1995), assumes the textual value of *any* cultural representation, including such a construction as a character in a television show, and the discursive power of such a contribution to public culture. In her incisive discussion of *Television, Representation and Gender* Julie D'Acci (in a summary of her general approach as outlined in *Feminist Television Criticism*: 1997: 375) interrogates the term 'representation' and makes a comment that is crucial to my own approach to representations of women characters in *Zero Tolerance*. She is concerned not with how realistic the representation is, but rather with the discursive construction of women through this representation on screen. This approach assumes a development of television studies that makes a cultural and not a structural analysis of television – she uses the term 'social representation' to refer to the discursive construction of reality by television representations (D'Acci: 1997: 375). It is in light of the suggestive insights of D'Acci that the representations of women in *Zero Tolerance* will be examined and discussed. Indeed D'Acci makes specific reference to the television's pivotal role in the construction of the nation in the post-modern world of communication technology in which we find ourselves. It is the words of the Prime Minister of a given nation *himself*, inside the *most*

intimate space of the metonymic heart of the nation: the home, that construct our understanding of the unity of the nation. 'Most of us come to have at least an inkling of what the normative ideal of a woman or man from our nation is supposed to look like, behave like, think like and feel like... television's selective, distorted and constrained representations of femininity came... to constitute the truth or reality of femininity' (D'Acci: 1997: 379). D'Acci suggests an approach based *inter alia* on the "Encoding/Decoding" model of Stuart Hall (1980: 91) that sees television analysis as a field of four interrelated sites of production: production, reception, programming and (historical and social) context (D'Acci: 1997: 379). This approach seeks to combine a structural approach to television studies with a cultural studies approach. It incorporates the notion of the rhetorical construction of subjects within the discursive formations of nation (among other collectivities). The model is a practical analysis of the politics of television production and reception. This integrated approach signals the incorporation of television into the study of literatures and other media considered to have cultural and discursive power in contemporary public culture.

Hall's approach to television in his early work on mass communications (1980: 90) is foundational of any contemporary understanding of television and its cultural activity. Identification is a contingent and fluid process, insists Hall, in his discussion of processes of encoding and decoding of television texts (1980: 92) and although television is a powerful tool of subjectification it is variously received in different contexts. He asserts the discursive power of the television, which is controlled by particular groups with particular interests, but refuses to allow an analysis to assume the uni-directional flow of power. He therefore stresses the individual nature of the experience of discourse as articulated by the television (Hall: 1980: 100). Similarly, what Robert Allen and Annette Hill (2004: 368) emphasise in their discussion of a study of the social representations of television in *The Television Studies Reader*, is the need to look not only at the particular representations that emerge but, more generally and insightfully, at the signifiers used to create meaning on television. It is these which provide insight into the economy of cultural signification that the discourse constructs. This semiotic approach is echoed by Homi Bhabha in his introduction to *Nation and Narration* (1995: 5) in which he outlines a method for interrogating the discourse of nation through literary representations of the nation. He argues that the nation is continually constructed (narrated) through the texts produced within that space and shows how the nation is continually coming into being (Bhabha: 1995: 3). An extension of his theory and method to an analysis of television texts, as continually producing the discursive entity of the nation, is productive for contemporary cultural studies that must take into account the shifting technologies of the modern nation.

John Fiske and John Hartley, (Fiske: 1986, 1989, 1992, 1994; Hartley: 1987, 1992, 1999), prolific and important authorities of television studies and particularly the cultural studies approach taken here, discuss in *Reading Television* a method of reading television that privileges its position in society as 'a casual part of everyday experience' that gives it heightened discursive power. It is the very familiarity of television which enables it... to act as an agency for defamiliarization' (Hartley & Fiske: 2003: 10). That is, television holds a particular power not only as the product of discursive formations but, they argue, it has a particular influential and *constitutive* role to play in the formation of discourse. They posit a mode of reading the text that takes its complex relations in society into account, rather than a structural or quantitative analysis:

to respond to the individual program, or, more importantly, the viewing session; matters of interpretation or how we respond to the complex significance and subtleties of the television text. That sort of reading of television requires that we move beyond the strictly objective and quantitative methods of content analysis and into the newer and less well explored discipline of semiotics. (2003: 21)

This cultural approach to television as a semiotic text that contributes to discourse and thereby interacts with processes of identity construction has been taken up by theorists undertaking feminist readings of television (Allen: 1985; Geraghty: 1991; Ang: 1997; Brunsdon: 1998, 2000). Laura Mulvey, in particular, famously formulated the discourse of patriarchy as permeating the field of television production in the form of the 'male gaze' (Mulvey: 1975: 8), which structures the television image through the eyes of the male, fetishising the image of the female body.

Hartley and Fiske emphasise, as does Hall, the contingency of signification processes: a televisual signifier is given a '*preferred meaning*' (Hartley and Fiske: 2003: 25) by its positioning in juxtaposition with other signifiers, but its signification cannot be fully pre-determined before it is read by the audience. A signifier is encoded with particular significance through the use of technical processes of signification that are not consciously read by the viewer, but rather subtly inferred using the hidden tools of filmic production; that is: sound, editing, camera-work, lighting, mise-en-scene and so on. These are not, however, able fully to control the subjective experience of the audience and in this way television must be understood as having, at least to some extent, open meanings. The power of the technical, unconscious processes of signification must also not be underestimated.

In the South African context, during apartheid, Keyan Tomaselli and Ruth Teer-Tomaselli were the foremost producers of scholarly discussion of television in South Africa (1981*a, b, c*, 1982) (and with Muller on the *press* 1987). Their Marxist approach to production and content was influenced by the need for activist content. They contested the naturalised ideology of apartheid as sold to the nation in the ideologically repugnant (state-sponsored propaganda) television content originating with television's arrival in South Africa in 1976, to the 1990s. Together they produced various collections on the function of television (among other cultural apparatuses) in the production and perpetuation of that 'South African form of racial capitalism' (Hayman & Tomaselli: 1989: 1). This socially active intention was present in the extensive work of the Tomasellis as it was in the other predominant critics of the apartheid television propaganda system: Van Zyl (1980, 1981); Hachten (1979*a, b, c*); Orlik (1970); Harrison and Eckman (1976) and Giffard - writing specifically about the *news* - (1976, 1980*a, b*); (and with Cohen: 1989). This overtly politicised scholarship is a signal of the ideological nature of the television products that were under analysis. It was impossible to make an un-partisan account of television production that was so obviously loaded with ideological and malevolent intent and content. Indeed, the government itself justified the late introduction of television in the country (in 1976) as ideological. The fear was that the introduction of television would lead to the corruption of what was euphemistically referred to as the 'South African way of life' (Steyn Commission, quoted in Hayman & Tomaselli: 1989: 6). Indeed, it is shown in various discussions on the history of television in South Africa that it was partly for its power as a mechanism for propaganda that television was eventually allowed into the country. This historical approach to television bears out the discursive approach to the study of television, particularly in the South African context, where it was initially regarded as corrupting, then accepted as powerful and harnessed to the interests of the ruling National Party. In post-apartheid South Africa, although possibly less rigidly or directly controlled by the ruling party, television still plays an important role in the construction and maintenance of a national discourse of a different although not entirely dissimilar kind. That is, television advertisements and programming are sometimes overtly (as is the case with the advertising campaign of *Proudly South African*, whose sole purpose is to promote a successful and cohesive new nation) and sometimes more covertly relied upon to create cohesion and a shared imaginary of nation. Although the new South Africa made a complete break with the old and apparently severed itself discursively and practically from the history of apartheid, certain continuities exist and are part of the discursive power of television.

I would like to conclude this discussion of methodology with an insistence on the need for nuance and subtlety in what follows.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said makes some insightful and suggestive comments about the problem of methodology for a discursive analysis like this one:

The idea of beginning, indeed the act of beginning, necessarily involves an act of delimitation by which something is cut out of a great mass of material, separated from the mass, and made to stand for, as well as be, a starting point, a beginning. (1995: 16)

The starting point that I found myself ineluctably drawn towards was the representation of Hannelie De Kok in *Zero Tolerance* and the way that it seemed simultaneously to jar against, yet perpetuate, aspects of post-apartheid South African discourse. This representation resonated with my own subjectivity in ways that provided a kind of personal imperative to carry out this exploration. In addition, Haruki Murakami's research into the 1997 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway: *Underground* (2000) influenced my personal experience of this research process. His description of the construction of the narrative of the gas attack that emerged in the form of the testimonies of victims and perpetrators of the attack describes the kind of haunting that *Zero Tolerance*, and its insight into identity construction in post-apartheid, affected on me:

A narrative is a story, not logic, nor ethics, nor philosophy. It is a dream you keep having, whether you realise it or not. Just as surely as you breathe, you go on ceaselessly dreaming your story. And in these stories you wear two faces. You are simultaneously subject and object. You are real and you are shadow. "Storyteller" and at the same time "character". It is through such multilayering of roles in our stories that we heal the loneliness of being an isolated individual in the world" (Murakami: 2000: 201).

This lyrical and possibly un-academic description of the beginning of a method of research implicates many of the aspects of my own personal experience of this research, which are relevant to this thesis to the extent that it was a subjective interest in the show and its discourse that lead to the academic investigation. It was also with a deep sense of ambivalence that I began to examine the discourse of the new South African nation – a discourse I felt myself swept up in as much as I felt the critiques and debates to be real and relevant. This ambivalence reasserted itself as the interrogation of the subjectivities of the makers of the show commenced, subjectivities that I felt - and feel - I share. All of this is not merely a confession as an aside to the supposedly scientific research contained in this paper. It is a deeply informative context for the research undertaken here. This paper is personal for me and represents a subjective struggle of my own – to balance my idealism and excitement about the new South African nation of which I feel myself to be a part, with my academic rigor and awareness of the limitations of such a nationalist discourse. This

ambivalence was felt in my attitude towards the representations I have identified and will proceed to interrogate and analyse. My key question then, is: will these representations have the effect of liberating women from patriarchal discourse or do they merely serve to hide the reality of the continued oppression of women by a patriarchy that has learned to represent itself differently?

Fortunately, these questions do not require a categorical answer. I am guided by the subtle and balanced approach that Stuart Hall emphasizes in his theorization of cultural studies: the answer is 'yes' and 'no' to both and something else altogether as well, as we will see. Said makes a useful comment about the relationship between a scholar's subjectivity and the integrity of his or her output:

no one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society. These continue to bear on what he does professionally, even though naturally enough his research and its fruits do attempt to reach a level of relative freedom from the inhibitions and the restrictions of brute, everyday reality. For there is such a thing as knowledge that is less, rather than more, partial than the individual (with his entangling and distracting life circumstances) who produces it. (1995: 10)

The quest is to create knowledge that is not merely a projection of my own subjectivity. It is an attempt to make conscious that which has been unconsciously influencing the production of identity and so this paper represents not only an academic endeavor but also a personal experience and an opening of my own subjectivity and a maturing process, for which I am grateful. I consider myself better able to contribute positively to the discourse of South African nationalism with my increased awareness of my own subjectivity and its relationship with that discourse.

Chapter Outline

The next chapter outlines the discourse of new South African nationalism that I have read as deeply informative not only of *Zero Tolerance*, but also of public culture in South Africa and indeed individual identity construction (including my own). It also outlines the theoretical approach taken here to the analysis of a discourse through the lens of a textual production of that discourse – a television show. This chapter, using Edward Said, Stuart Hall, V. Y. Mudimbe and Homi Bhabha, sets up the theoretical building blocks of the thesis, which takes its case study from the contemporary South African context. Chapter two thus sets up the discursive relationship between the show and new South African nationalism that is substantiated in the chapters that follow.

The first of these discussion chapters takes as its example the representation of the domestic worker, Francina. It illustrates an important aspect of discourse: that in order to construct a coherent narrative that encourages a harmonious relationship with the discursive entity of nation, it is necessary to elide and silence certain aspects of daily realities of life. Francina is used as a tool in *Zero Tolerance* to illustrate the gap between the imperative of representation that harnesses the signifier of the domestic worker in a particular way, and the material reality of existence of domestic workers. The question of this silencing may be read in more than one way: as an act of opening up the discourse and liberating the domestic worker from the historical stricture of representation in the discourse of apartheid, and as a silencing of the daily struggle(s) of these women and thus an abandonment of their plight. It is not the purpose of this paper to make this kind of vulgar judgment, but rather to contribute a new level of awareness to the discourse in order to render its idealistic and future-bound rhetoric more and not less meaningful in the everyday life of its subjects.

The second chapter looks at the central character, Denzela, and her construction as *self*-representation of the makers of the show. Sara Blecher explained in her conversation with me that Denzela was based on her own subjectivity and that any apparently feminist-inflections to this representation are merely natural and normal to her after her childhood with a single, working mother and her own experience of single, working motherhood. Denzela constitutes a representation of Sara as much as she does a representation of the nation. Sara could not be such a natural national stereotype, in the context of the post-apartheid focus on blackness, if she merely constructed a realistic image of herself: a white middle-class woman. This discussion highlights the contingent nature of the work of discourse – it is experienced and expressed through subjective identity construction and experience and Denzela is an example of the manner in which the stereotypes of the discourse are domesticated and harnessed by cultural producers as expressions of their own identities.

The third and final discussion chapter looks in detail at the representation of Hannelie, the gay cop - and the manner in which she illustrates the discourse. The critique I make of the construction of this character in a particular episode is that she is made to represent a rigid binary construction of the *post*-apartheid state in opposition to the apartheid state, through the medium of the Afrikaner subjectivity she represents. Hannelie symbolises the history of Afrikaner identity and all the conservatism and cultural isolation that comes with it – in the form of her history and her family –

who are *boers*⁵, living on the *plaas* in the countryside. She also symbolises the new South Africa, given that she is an openly homosexual woman and a direct beneficiary of the new rights embedded in the constitution. When she goes home for her brother's wedding she is forced to choose one side of the binary or the other. That is, she is forced to choose a subjectivity that conforms with the closed history of Afrikanerdom, or a new subjectivity, constructed in binary opposition with the old – that rejects the history of Afrikaans culture completely. This includes the abandonment of her family and her history, which is the choice she eventually makes. In this way Afrikanerdom, symbolised by Hannelie, even in the open, post-apartheid state, is given little choice – either it conforms with its historical subjectivity and isolates itself from the rest of the country and the positive future entailed in its discourse; or it must conform with the new, open, discourse, and leave its history behind. The construction of this binary opposition of past and future allows little space for the nuanced negotiation of her sexuality that Hannelie really needs in order to come to terms with her new homosexual identity as *part of* her old Afrikaner identity. Indeed it closes Afrikanerdom off from the opportunity to re-negotiate its subjectivity in the post-apartheid state.

These three discussion chapters, building on the foundation of the introductory chapters, are an exploration of the discourse of nationalism in post-apartheid South Africa as it is expressed, perpetuated and contested in *Zero Tolerance*. This thesis seeks to gain a nuanced understanding of the processes of representation at work in the show, particularly with reference to the discourse of nationalism that I believe is so ubiquitous and influential in post-apartheid South Africa. The conclusion makes some suggestions about the manner in which this kind of project, an attempt to become aware of discourse and its implications for individual identity-construction and individual cultural production, can contribute to the discourse of a truly new South African nation. It is also a discussion of the limitations of this discourse, its erasures and silences and the interests that these may serve. It is with a sense of my own interest in strengthening the voices of its silenced subjects that I complete this thesis, on an aspect of the new South African cultural scene. It is not out of a desire to break it down or prove it false, for it carries the power to alleviate the daily struggle of those people living in this country who still suffer severe deprivation as an ongoing result of the structural inequalities perpetrated during apartheid.

⁵ Stereotypical Afrikaans farmers.

Nations and Discourse

A nation is a physical entity with finite (but porous) physical borders enclosing a heterogeneous human existence. It is also a discursive entity with rhetorical boundaries and ideological constructions that serve to bind the heterogeneity into a unified whole. In his discussion of the diaspora of the post-colony, Stuart Hall proposes in his essay, "Encoding/Decoding," that 'our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with a stable, unchanging and continuous framework of reference and meaning' (1991: 393). Discourse that binds people together does so by connecting them to one another through sameness and in so doing silences various aspects of internal difference. This constructed sameness distances us from others, creating a whole, unified self in opposition to an 'other.' The power of this discourse, according to Hall, is profoundly personal (Hall: 1991: 392). Identification processes are contingent and fluid; even the most hegemonic ideology cannot be perceived as monolithic and all-powerful (Hall: 1996: 3). This is not least because individuals' experiences of and interactions with a discourse are shaped by their positioning in a given context – historical and social. This is especially so in apartheid *and* post-apartheid South Africa – a person's race, class and gender (among others) will determine the particular terms of engagement of an individual subjectivity with that discourse. The relationship, then, between an individual and a national discourse is not simply one of direct subjectification, of passive identity, but rather involves and is mediated by a contingent and nuanced series of power relations and identifications. However, to acknowledge the nuanced nature of this relationship is certainly not to discount the particularly personal and intimate nature and the profound influence that a discourse holds over an individual.

In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson famously addressed the complex theoretical challenges posed by the idea of nation (as a physical entity and a rhetorical construction) by formulating the *nation* as an 'imagined community' (1983: 15). He shows that the community is imagined as both limited and sovereign – and conceived of as a 'deep horizontal comradeship' (1983: 16). The nation is thus imaginatively fashioned as being whole, finite and free. It serves discursively to unify all of its citizen-subjects across any material inequality that may prevail. Anne McClintock notes in her article, "No Longer in A Future Heaven, Women and Nationalism in South Africa," that the nation thus imagined as a community comprises 'systems of representation

whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community' (1991: 110).

It is the purpose of the discourse of nation, the imaginary that creates the bond of comradeship between individuals and indeed informs the construction of their identities, to continue to produce the nation and to sustain and perpetuate its discursive existence into the future.

The constructedness of nations/nationalisms, and particularly the manner in which these are gendered, is also emphasised by McClintock, who makes a Marxist feminist analysis and proposes that the term 'invented community' (1991: 104) avoids the possibly problematic associations of 'imagined' productivity and creativity by refusing-

'the conservative faith in essence and nature, while at the same time conveying more powerfully the implications of labour and creative ingenuity; technology and institutional power. Nations are elaborate social *practices* enacted through time, laboriously fabricated through the media and the printing press, in schools, churches, the myriad forms of public culture, in trade unions and funerals, protest marches and uprisings' (McClintock: 1991: 104).

and it is through these processes that the nation becomes 'constitutive of people's identities' (McClintock: 2001: 104). All nationalisms, she argues, are gendered (2001: 105).

In fact, McClintock makes a searing structuralist critique of the position of women in the post-apartheid South African nation. She makes the argument that 'nationalisms are contested systems of representation enacted through social institutions and legitimising or limiting people's access to the rights and resources of the nation-state' (McClintock: 1991: 105). She argues that the structure of the nation-state is not merely discursive and does not simply result in the rhetorical construction of subjectivities and thereby frame discursive existence, but in fact reaches deep inside the day-to-day material reality of the subjects of the nation by restricting or allowing access to the resources of the nation (see also Lazarus for critique of discourses used in South African nation building that privilege elite interests over those of the disenfranchised majority: 2004: 616). This is significant because she shows that while women are discursively included in the nation as signifiers, there are disparities between their representation and the material existence of women, as will be illustrated in the discussion chapter on the representation of the domestic worker that follows.

What McClintock's critique serves to highlight is what Meg Samuelson refers to in "Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women: Stories of The South African Transition" as 'fetishised female

characters' (2005: i) and the manner in which their existence is harnessed to the construction of an all-inclusive and progressive nationalism - the achievement of a rainbow nation ideal. Hall too notes, in his work on cultural identity and diaspora the use of the mother figure, 'Africa as mother' as a means of unifying - creating an imaginary coherence where there is fragmentation (1991: 400).

V. Y. Mudimbe, in *The Idea of Africa*, his highly influential work on the construction of the discursive entity known as *Africa*, has made considerable contributions to the academic endeavour of identifying discourse and analysing its construction and sustenance (1994: xii). The problem for a researcher looking into the discourse of *nation* is both *where* the discursive entity of the state is constructed and perpetuated and *how*. Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl Ann Michael have shown in their essay, "Autobiographical Acts," that the discourse of South African nationalism is as pervasive and influential in post-apartheid South African identity construction (2000: 317) as Edward Said's *Orientalism* on writing and thinking about the Orient:

No one writing, thinking or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. (1995: 3)

In their study on the construction of post-apartheid South African autobiography, discussed in more detail in the chapter on self-representation which follows, Nuttall and Michael show the centrality of the discourse of nationhood to the construction of individual identity in contemporary South African public culture. This chapter is concerned with the nature of this discourse and its influence on the construction of the identities and representations will be examined in detail throughout the rest of the paper. Mudimbe offers a model that proposes the simultaneous existence and mutual reinforcement, of three layers of discourse which are usefully employed here.

Foundational Myths

The first level of discourse is the 'zero degree discourse' (Mudimbe: 1994: xiii - this is analytically akin to the intimate one discussed by Hall):

Silent but permanent, this discreet and, at the same time, systematic reference to a genesis marks the everyday practices of a community. Families reenact this discourse in their ordinary lives; mothers consciously transmit its rules to their children (teaching the origins of a culture as they force upon the child an internalization of a civilization, its spiritual and cultural rules, and its values), and the community as a whole – through its procedures of initiation, schooling and socialization – will make sure it produces a citizen who has the 'feel' of a tradition and who thus, as an adult, will act and react normally and correctly in everyday life. (Mudimbe: 1994: xiii)

A foundational myth is central to the process of imaginatively binding diverse individuals – a common origin, a genesis, links people to one another in historical sameness. Hall suggests that the cohesion of a cultural (or national) identity unifies ‘beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history’ (1991: 393). History, then, is one institution that is harnessed in the construction of a unified nation. The discourse is perpetuated invisibly in the most intimate spaces of the home, in schools and in social life.

Television is one such site where this discourse is reproduced. Its daily positioning in the intimate space of the home lends its powerful influence extra weight, as illustrated by the resistance of the apartheid government to the introduction of television and its subsequent introduction for the explicit purpose of perpetuating the apartheid ideology, as discussed above. It is through this medium that ordinary South Africans are exposed to the foundational myth of the genesis of the ‘new’ South Africa, which is told, retold and interpreted variously in support of state and individual efforts towards the nation-building imperative. The extensive broadcast coverage, for example, of Nelson Mandela’s release from prison, the first democratic elections, his subsequent inauguration under the theme ‘One Nation Many Cultures,’ the public proclamation of the ‘progressive’ new Constitution, are, as Nuttall and Carli Coetzee suggest in the introduction to *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, sites and events in which the nation – a *new* (post-apartheid) South African one – was constructed (1998: 14). In the intimate space of the home, individuals engaged, in a dialectic process of identification and subjectification, with the fashioning of an imagined community and personal identity.

The particular nature of the South African discourse as it is influenced by the various institutions of the post-apartheid nation is discussed in some detail and with specific focus on gender by Samuelson in her PhD (2005). In this thesis she lays bare, *inter alia*, three of the foundational myths that harness historical female figures in their production of the nation: Sarah Baartman, Nongqawuse and Krotoa-Eva. She argues that ‘women bear the symbolic weight of nationalism; their bodies are the contested sites on which national identities are erected and national unity is forged’ (2005: 1). She shows, for instance, how these three female figures of the history of South Africa are deployed during the transitional phase of the nation to strengthen the metaphors and paradigms of the discourse of the nation. ‘During the transition, Krotoa-Eva has been the subject of an astonishing amount of historical revisionist writing, genealogical claims and fictional reconstructions’ (2005: 12). Writers, Samuelson shows, appropriate this woman’s story in an attempt to create a genealogical link between their white subjectivity and the birth of the nation.

The second historical figure is *Nongqawuse*, whose tale of prophesy is harnessed in the transitional phase by Zakes Mda. The author 'delves into the historical past in order to raise pressing questions about the 'new' nation' (2005: 42). The third figure discussed by Samuelson is Sarah Baartman, a woman whose tale has had a position of extreme public value in the transition. 'Her body – already cast as 'sexualised savage' – was re-cast and recovered, in service of the project of legitimising the 'new' South Africa, as it traversed a route from the imperial stage of the early 19th Century to the nation building theatre of transitional South Africa' (2005: 73). The theatrical re-importation of Baartman's body and public burial of it were used by *various* interest groups as symbolic of 'national recovery' (2005: 76). Samuelson's incisive analysis of these three figures alone illustrates the discursive and material burden of symbolism and rhetorical construction borne by the bodies of women. Samuelson goes on to look at literature, at the register of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (a deeply influential event in the foundation of the discourse of the post-apartheid South African nation discussed below) and at the story of Winnie Mandela, to show the manner in which women – as signifiers – are harnessed and represented in service of the discourse of the nation.

The institutional construction of foundational myths - with its gendered power relations and attendant implications for the imagining or invention of community - is nowhere more apparent than in the Constitutionally sanctioned Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Extensive criticism and contestation of the ability of this staging of reconciliation to heal and unify the nation highlights, again, the particular harnessing of women's voices as part of this process. This commission encouraged and authorised certain registers of speaking that set in motion new orthodoxies of self-representation and subjectification in the nation that were foundational of the discourse of the post-apartheid nation. These have however been widely critiqued as being incapable of fulfilling the healing trajectory for all victims given an opportunity to speak. The Interim Constitution provided in its epilogue for the establishment of the TRC which was later formalised by Parliament in the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995. Broadly its functions were addressed by three specialised committees dealing respectively with amnesty and indemnity, violations of human rights and reparations for victims of past abuses. The TRC held public hearings where men and women who had suffered 'human rights abuses' under the apartheid regime were invited to share their memories and assist the commission to establish the 'truth' behind these experiences.

The TRC's assumptions about the nature of 'truth' and the presumption that it would necessarily lead to individual and collective healing and reconciliation have, amongst other significant limitations encountered by the TRC, been widely critiqued. It was covered extensively in the media, debated in public spaces and formed an important backdrop for and foundation of the nationalist discourse. Fiona Ross says in *Bearing Witness* that '[b]y implication it was a civic duty to narrate one's experiences of violation and pain and thereby bring about both personal healing and healing of the national body' (2003: 79). Ross explores, particularly with reference to the gendered nature of the experience of the Commission, the 'erasures and silences' (2003: 5) that went into the telling of what was intended to be the 'truth' about the abuses suffered under apartheid. She undertook detailed ethnographic work with women who testified at the public hearings and some that chose not to. In this way she demonstrated how the methodological approach adopted, and its categorisation of people as 'victims' who suffered 'gross human rights abuses' combined with the public and formulaic nature of testifying, limited who would speak, how they would speak and what they would speak about.

What Ross found was a significantly *gendered* paradigm of telling and healing. By requiring the subject to speak as a victim of very specifically defined abuses - along the model of human rights - women's experiences were channelled in specific ways, and some women felt disinclined (or were unable, due for instance to travel costs or the stigma associated with telling) to enter into the process at all. (See also Nuttall: 2000: 307-309). Women, Ross found, spoke *as mothers and wives* of their sons' and husbands' experiences. Also, the focus fell only on their physical experiences in a manner that Ross notes marginalised the possibility of speaking freely of experiences of systemic violence and deprivation, re-presenting women in the classic nationalist image as 'mothers of the nation'. For example it was particularly women, who were encouraged to speak about rape (Ross: 2003: 23). Motherhood has a long history in the nationalisms of the ANC and Afrikaner discourses of the previous regime (see Yuval Davis & Anthias: 1989: 1-15; McClinock: 1991: 120). The trope is harnessed in the context of the TRC's discursive construction of the nation. This has profound consequences for the discursive harnessing of women's bodies illustrated by Samuelson and discussed above. Given that the TRC played such a consciously foundational role in the construction of the post-apartheid nation, the perpetuation of this trope of the patriarchal stereotype at this important time has far-reaching implications for the position of women in the post-apartheid South African nation. As Samuelson argues and Ross illustrates it is particularly in the manner of the telling of women's stories that the erasures and silences of the discourse of nationalism embodied in the TRC may be examined and analysed. It is in women's voices that the lack of

discursive freedom is highlighted and this is central to the nature of discourse itself and specifically the nature of nationalist discourse.

The rainbow metaphor, famously coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1994: 5) in the context of the TRC, represents the ideal of the national discourse. It encompasses inclusion, celebration of difference (as an expression of sameness), democracy, peace and substantive equality for all. Inherent in the utopian ideal embodied by the reference to the 'rainbow nation' is a trajectory into the future that is constructed in opposition with the past. The new nation includes frequent reference to the past, with re-visioning of racial signifiers of the apartheid era and internal reference to the history of violence and oppression in the very title *post-apartheid*. This is part of a construction of a binary between the past and the future. The future is constructed as all that the past was not: peace, democracy and, most importantly, equal access to resources for all. Apartheid itself is one of the foundational myths of post-apartheid South Africa. Samuelson points out that the appropriation of women's identities in public culture in service of the discourse of nation is a violent silencing of their heterogeneous subjectivities, histories and futures. Women's voices are harnessed to tell the story of the utopian post-apartheid ideal, albeit that their stories may or may not fit in with the nationalist trajectory.

The nation is built on the foundation of myths of a shared origin. Samuelson has discussed the harnessing of women's stories and bodies in the production of such a historical base. The TRC also played a significant role in the construction of the basis for the discourse of the new nation. These sites and events that Nuttall and Coetzee identify as the *genesis* of the discourse - the 'birth' of the post-apartheid *nation* - are significant and highly influential (1998: 1).

Homi Bhabha's discussion of stereotypes as sites of construction and perpetuation of discourse can be used to emphasize the importance of the images and bodies and names of women in the construction of powerful nationalisms. He illustrates the usage of stereotype as a major discursive strategy, repeating and thus repeatedly constructing the discourse around signifiers that are the building blocks of the discourse itself. These stereotypes are the basic elements of Mudimbe's zero degree discourse – they are the basic elements of the '*processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse' (Bhabha: 1994: 67). The images of women that circulate in South African public culture are consequently the basic elements whereby women are subjectified into the discourse of South African nationalism and that discourse itself is perpetuated. Stereotypes construct foundations upon which the nationalist discourse can be built – using the

repetition of known characters and images - media and other cultural producers can perpetuate a discursive formation. The stereotypes, then, the known characters that inhabit the nationalist discourse, are foundational myths of their own.

Eve Bertelsen's suggestive discussion in her essay, "Ads and Amnesia: Black Advertising in the New South Africa", of advertising targeting black South Africans during the transition between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa is of interest here as she shows how advertisements of the 1980s and 1990s 'make a significant contribution to the constitution of new subjects'....and develop an 'organic ideology' using contemporary South African cultural discourse as material to suit the needs of late capitalist demands (1998: 224). Stereotypes are produced and used to perpetuate the discourse in the service of interests and in the service of the discourse itself. In this advertising trend:

terms of the discourse of popular 'struggle' are redeployed, as these texts free signifiers (words and images) from their signified in the political discourse (a shared social good) and attach them to new signifieds (consumer goods and the transformative power of the market). By transforming notions of equity and political choice into the freedom to choose between products, such texts exploit the aspirational power of the political discourse while simultaneously defusing its oppositional potential. (1998: 225)

Bertelsen reads the advertising strategy as 'shifting the co-ordinates of systems of shared and individual meanings...' and as playing a part in the construction of new identities. These, she shows, are framed in relation to the signifiers of the social and political transition, the discursive production of the *nation*. This process, she warns, also requires the silencing and forgetting of significant aspects of the past in the discursive reconstitution of unsettled identities during the transition period (1998: 226). The stereotypes are produced in this way and serve as a primary source of material for representation and repetition of the discursive formation that is the nation.

The more recent 'Proudly South African' advertisements are perhaps the best example of the representation of the imagined community of nation. They are a powerful and evocative use of images of diversity linked by the common theme of shared South African-ness. They vividly illustrate the unifying maxim of one nation many cultures. Sport, as discussed by Douglas Booth (1996: 459), is another site in which the nation is constructed, especially through its representation in the media. The media play a powerful role in the process of discursive formation – constructing the underlying concept of nation as a given – merely a background for some exciting event (sporting or otherwise). In this way, we can see the variety of interests that are served by the unification of the

diversity of South African existence into a homogenous experience of nation. Mudimbe's zero degree discourse then, takes the form of the daily perpetuation of unification and is carried out in large part – especially in the modern 'information age' – by the media. It is constructed in the form of advertisements selling the nation, and selling other products, as well as in the production and publication of events – directly in the foundational events such as the inauguration and the elections and more indirectly, but also powerfully, in sporting and other unifying events.

The Second Level: Nation as Science

Mudimbe's second level of discourse is constituted by intellectual knowledge. It is given authority by the scientific method with which it is constructed in academic disciplines. These lend credence to the zero degree discourse: 'by their critical power, domesticating the domain of popular knowledge and inscribing it in a rational field' (Mudimbe: 1994: xiii). This is what Edward Said means in his discussion of discourse in the introduction to *Orientalism* when he shows that discourse is supported by 'vocabulary, scholarship, imagery and doctrines' (1995: 12). These are to be found being produced in academic institutions, by a 'style of thought based upon ontology and epistemology' (embodied by the work of poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists and administrators) and by corporate institutions' (1995: 2).

The lengthy and highly publicised process of negotiating the Interim and Final Constitutions and the documents themselves are sites in which the discourse of the post-apartheid South African nation has been formalised. The Constitution provides a legal framework (widely acclaimed to be one of the most progressive) for a new nation. In his essay, "The Constitutional Entrenchment of Memory" (1998) Eduard Fagan demonstrates, by close attention to the text, the implicit and explicit embodiment of the past in the Constitution, combining the more ordinary purpose of a Constitution (the structuring of government organisation and its 'road map') with the character of a historical document (Constitution of South Africa: 1996). He notes that what is most striking about the Constitution 'as an instrument for transformation' is '*the extent to which the preamble of both the interim and the final Constitutions are concerned with the Constitution as an instrument for healing the ills of the past*' (1998: 251).

Public knowledge and the banality of the ordinary citizen's understanding of the horrors and inequities of the apartheid past (as contrasted with the ideal of the post-apartheid future) are formalised in the manner of Mudimbe's second level of discursive construction by their disciplining into legal science. The Constitution (1996), thus constructed, with its frequent reference to the past

and the ideals of the nationalist discourse (unity, democracy and equality), lends authority to the 'zero degree discourse' by formalising the construction of the post-apartheid nation's fundamentally different character from that of the apartheid nation. The nation is actively and formally constructed as unified – the maxim 'One Nation Many Cultures' is echoed in the very first phrase of the preamble: 'We, the people of South Africa' and is repeated and affirmed in what follows: '[b]elieve that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity' (Constitution of South Africa: 1996: Preamble). The ideal trajectory of the new nation is uttered in formal and legal terms also in the articulation of a shared desire (and constitutional purpose) to '[b]uild a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations' (The Constitution of South Africa: 1996: Preamble). The Constitution lends its disciplinary weight to the zero degree narrative with the values and ideals central to the discourse of the post-apartheid nation. These values include 'ubuntu' - an imprecise term often cited in the Constitution and in case-law and which is used to mean different things in different contexts (see Mogkoro: 1998: 21). 'Human dignity' is a term referenced more than five times in the Constitution itself and often also referred to in the case-law to mean a value permeating the entire Constitution or substantively applied as a right (See Chaskalson: 2000: 135). By legitimising these values and ideals as rational, legal concepts to be enforced using the national judicial apparatus, the Constitution, and all of its subsequent case-law, gives rise to a concrete second level of discourse, which is a reference point for the rationalisation of the daily perpetuation of the discourse in the zero degree level.

The Third Level: Making it Conscious

The third level of discourse that Mudimbe identifies, using Foucault, is what I am attempting to achieve with this thesis. It is an interrogation of the disciplinary knowledge. 'It tries to restore what eluded ... consciousness: the influences that affected it, the implicit philosophies that were subjacent to it, the unformulated thematics, the unseen obstacles; it describes the unconscious' (Mudimbe: 1994: xiii). This paper, then, is an attempt to locate, critique and make visible, the unconscious relationship that exists between the representations of women in *Zero Tolerance* and the national discourse. We will see how pervasive this national discourse is in the construction of fictional characters on the television.

These representations, then, are not merely fabrications and neither are they entirely constituted by the discourse. The process of stereotyping, as interrogated by Bhabha, will be shown to be mediated by subjective and localised processes that will be discussed in detail below. Bhabha is interested in

the psychological implications of the usage of stereotypes and makes the argument that no analysis can ever be so simple as to suggest that there is merely a truth that is masked by a discourse:

Stereotyping is not the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent ... [it is] the masking and splitting of 'official' and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities of (racist) discourse. (Bhabha: 1994: 81)

Zero Tolerance makes use of stereotypes to create a team of South African investigators representative of the 'rainbow' nation. These stereotypes are at once familiar signifiers of nationhood and belonging and active building blocks to sustain the new nation. This important point links to the proviso made by Said which resonates as a nuancing of his critical insights on the power of Orientalism: 'To believe that politics in the form of imperialism bears upon the production of literature, scholarship, social theory and history writing is by no means equivalent to saying that culture is therefore a demeaned or denigrated thing' (Said: 1995: 14). This signals an important element of discourse analysis and relates to Mudimbe's third level of discourse, discussed earlier, which seeks to contribute positively by illuminating the 'erasures and silences', by making conscious that which has hitherto been unconscious and thereby creating space within the discourse for voices that have been previously silenced. As Samuelson states: '[t]he dreams and desires encoded in the rainbow metaphor are not ones with which we should want to dispense. Nor, however, should we dispense with a persistent critique that would help us to articulate how they can be more fully realised than they currently are' (2005: 10). That power does not simply flow in one direction, subjecting citizens and their identities to the inescapable and monolithic discourse of the nation is obvious. It is in the minutiae of the representations inherent in one television show in one nation at one time that the particularity of the relationship between individuals and individual representations and the national discourse may be illustrated. Through this examination, a better understanding emerges of the nature of the power of the discourse of the new South African nationalism and also its limitations.

Conclusion

In the chapters that follow, I will be looking closely at three of the women characters in *Zero Tolerance*. In Chapter Three the spotlight falls on Francina, the domestic worker, for the manner in which she illustrates the erasure and silencing of material reality in the service of discourse. Domestic workers are harnessed as signifiers of the utopian ideal of the discourse because they symbolise all that was worst about apartheid and thus all that is good about post-apartheid. This

chapter examines what has been erased in order to construct this image of the utopian ideal. In chapter four Denzela is examined for the extent to which she constitutes an imagined self-representation of Sara Blecher. The makers of the show must also individually navigate the post-apartheid discourse that privileges images of blackness and victimhood and authorises their voices to speak. Hilary and Sara Blecher are neither victims nor are they black and their different strategies of identification – harnessing signifiers of blackness in their own ways – are examined in this chapter.

In the final chapter Hannelie and Rolanda Marais (the actress who play her) are shown to take different approaches to the navigation of the new post-apartheid Afrikaner discourse. The new nationalist discourse is constructed in many ways in binary opposition with the apartheid history it seeks to obliterate. In this way Hannelie, a character who signifies all that is new and positive about the new discourse as a happy, young, homosexual woman – freed from a history of deep oppression of this subjectivity is constructed in binary opposition with *her own* history. Hannelie is a split character, as is the subjectivity of Afrikanerdom in South Africa in many ways split. Afrikaans people have to choose a way of navigating the new discourse: some reject it entirely and isolate themselves, as does Hannelie's family. Some reject their history entirely and alienate themselves from their traditions and culture of their families and Afrikanerdom, as does Hannelie in the show. The more subtle approach is the attempt made, mostly by young Afrikaans South Africans (and exemplified by Rolanda), to navigate the binary and find space for existence in its interstices. They attempt to find ways of celebrating elements of the history (which, although it is deeply associated with apartheid also carries elements of good in it) and also to find ways of hybridising this historical subjectivity into something new, something imbued with the positive, meliorative trajectory of the new discourse.

FRANCINA: REPRESENTING THE NATION IN THE STEREOTYPE OF THE DOMESTIC WORKER

‘Any telling is produced of silences and erasures’

Fiona Ross (2003: 5)

Discourse and Domestic Workers

The discourse of the nation is articulated through the representations of women in *Zero Tolerance* in the ways that I have discussed in the preceding chapters. I have chosen to examine and discuss in some detail three particular characters in the show that represent different aspects of the discourse of post-apartheid South African nationalism. The first of these is concerned with the representation of an important and familiar figure of South African daily life: the domestic worker. I have chosen to focus on Francina because she illustrates the important insight into discursive process that Fiona Ross makes, which provides the epigraph of this chapter. A detailed analysis of this representation of a stereotype of South African life will show how the representation seems to open up the paradigm and liberate the subjectivity of domestic worker. However, it also silences and erases elements of her material existence and the realities of her daily life. What I am suggesting is that her representation in *Zero Tolerance* is in some sense a fabrication, constructed according to a new orthodoxy contained in the new discourse of the South African nation. This discourse requires that women be represented as liberated from the oppression of the double burden of apartheid: along racial and gender lines.

The construction of the character of Francina, Denzela’s domestic worker, may be described in some ways as ameliorative of the history of the role and subjectivity of the domestic worker in South Africa. This is so in the sense that it constitutes a different picture from the one that traditionally contained this figure of South African life. I am suggesting, however, that this representation that appears to liberate domestic workers from their traditionally constricted existence, in fact also masks the continued socio-economic and discursive oppression of women in this role. The job of domestic worker continues to be one that is shot through with material inequalities and discursive repressions that are linked to the economy of race and class associated with apartheid.

An important element of the discourse of the new South African nationalism is, as illustrated above, that the past has been broken with. The new, democratic nation, with equal opportunities and access to resources for *all*, is constructed as combating the inequality and oppression of apartheid. That, as

will be shown, the material existence of domestic workers has not, in fundamental ways, changed, is counter to this ideal trajectory of the post-apartheid nation. In order for the domestic worker to be present in a representation of contemporary South Africa, she must be discursively reconstructed to fit with the ideals of the nation. Thus when I first watched *Zero Tolerance* I was struck by the changes to the stereotype of the domestic worker in the show's representation. It seemed to me that the discursive power of the television was being used to re-figure the stereotype of the domestic worker. This includes a restructuring of the relationship between what were discussed by Michael Whisson and William Weil in their searing critique of the structures of domestic work, (Whisson and Weil: 1971: 36) along less oppressive and more nuanced lines – with less uni-directional power relations. It was only as I read into the contemporary theorization of the existence and discursive construction of domestic workers that I began to understand the processes of erasure at work in the construction of this character.

Francina and Lebo

Francina is Denzela's domestic worker. When his parents divorce, Siso, Denzela's son, spends increasing amounts of time with Francina. At one point when his father comes to collect him and take him for the weekend as per the informal agreement between Denzela and Thabo (his father – played by Lindani Nkosi), Siso refuses to leave with him. He says 'No, no, I don't want to go to your house – I want to stay here with Francina' (*Zero Tolerance*: 2002). It is with Francina, then, that Siso associates the security of his home, and not with his mother. Francina is a Tswana woman who is older than Denzela and she is consequently addressed in the home as *Mma*⁶, while she addresses Denzela by her first name. Her home is in Pietersburg, where her family lives, although she lives at Denzela's house in Johannesburg most of the year. Denzela is often kept late at work or required to leave town on an investigation or indeed is out for dinner with a lover and at these times it is Francina (and not, say, Denzela's own sister), on whom Denzela always calls to stay with Siso. Francina, therefore, has a very close relationship with Siso, as illustrated by his reliance on her for security after his parents' divorce.

In an episode in the first season entitled *Killer on the Roof*, a juxtaposition is established between Francina and another domestic worker, Lebo Mahlangu (played by Harriet Manamela). This contrast, between the progressive representation of Francina (and her relationship with Denzela), and Lebo (and her relationship with her employer, 'Mrs Sacks', played by Lynn Hooker) serves to

⁶ Mother.

emphasise the progressiveness of the representation of Francina and her life as a domestic worker. Lebo's daughter, Zinzi, falls to her death off the roof of the block of flats where they live, while Lebo is busy babysitting Mrs Sacks' grandchildren downstairs in Mrs Sacks' flat. The episode opens with this juxtaposition through fast parallel editing of Denzela waking up suddenly in the middle of the night and rushing through to Siso's room to see if he is safe with Zinzi's slow-motion fall and death. In this way a connection is established between Denzela and Lebo, across the boundary of the traditionally hermetically sealed maid/madam divide, a connection based on their shared role as mothers.

When Denzela is called in to investigate Zinzi's death she is judgmental of Mrs Sacks and implies that she is partly culpable for the death, as it was her employer's grandchildren and not her own child that Lebo was protecting at Zinzi's time of greatest need. The implication is that Lebo's agency in respect of her daughter is limited, by Mrs Sacks' economic tyranny over her. It does not appear to occur to Denzela that she may be implicated in the power relation that has privileged Mrs Sacks' grandchildren over Lebo's child in the hierarchy of provision of care that is established in the domestic worker/employer relationship. Denzela automatically relates to Lebo as a mother and has no inclination towards the shared subjectivity of both being employers with Mrs Sacks.

The structure of address is also different in the two contrasted relationships: Mrs Sacks retains the formal and hierarchical 'Mrs Sacks', while Lebo is referred to in intimate terms as Lebo, this is in direct contrast with Denzela and Francina, as discussed above. Throughout the episode the comparison of Lebo and Francina as representations of domestic worker-hood in South Africa is extended through the vehicle of Denzela. She is seen on the roof of the building talking to Lebo's babysitter and then immediately shown at home talking to Francina about Siso. The use of this style of editing serves to situate the two different contexts and relationship in direct opposition with one another, through the placement of one directly alongside one another in visual sequence.

Mrs Sacks is coded throughout the episode as a relic of apartheid and as a stereotype of the apartheid employer of a domestic worker. She is one of the last remaining white residents of a block of flats in Hillbrow, where she has lived for thirty years. She is grumpy and afraid to leave the flat and says she does not like the way the world has changed outside her flat since she moved in. This statement is loaded with symbolism (and irony) as the world outside the building when she moved in was the world of apartheid, which was a world socially engineered along racial lines to effect social and geographical separation through a system imbued with gross human rights

violation, struggle and terrible oppression. She has failed to grasp the significance of the change and this is reflected in her relationship with her domestic worker. Lebo remains constrained in the old bind of being unable to care for her own child as she is forced to provide care for somebody else's. All of this serves to emphasise Denzela and Francina as representative of the 'new' South Africa.

In other words, Denzela's and Francina's relationship is constructed as progressive and transformed, by contrast with the old discourse of maid/madam represented by Lebo's and Mrs Sacks' relations. This is symbolised by the contrast between Lebo's and Mrs Sacks' living conditions, within the same building. Mrs Sacks lives in a large, spacious and quiet flat. Lebo lives with a group of so-called illegal informal settlers on the roof of the building in a small, dark, room surrounded by many other people also crammed into small spaces. The representation of Mrs Sacks' as opposed to Lebo's spaces are coded as visually and aurally different: the lighting is dirtier, the shots closer and more cramped and the camera-work more shaky in the scenes taking place on the roof of the building. Mrs Sacks' flat, by contrast, is represented in slow, stationary shots, with less ambient noise and more clean lighting. In this comparison, and the death of Zinzi (with its implication of Mrs Sacks' culpability) a hierarchy is established that privileges Denzela's approach to the domestic worker institution and this serves to shadow any questions that may be asked about the continuation of the structures of the apartheid maid/madam relation in the Denzela/Francina relation. A closer look at the contemporary theorization of post-apartheid domestic worker/employer relations yields some important silences inherent in this apparently ameliorative representation.

All of this is not to suggest that the representation of Francina is consciously dishonest. Neither is it true that the representation may not yet indeed have an ameliorative effect on the discursive construction of the domestic worker and reflect her improved conditions of material existence. In *Distant Companions: Servants and Employers in Zambia 1900-1985*, Karen Hansen notes, by reference to the past in South Africa, the existence of 'the paradox of conspicuous presence and social invisibility' (1989: 5). The inclusion of this representation at all, then, serves to render visible an element of daily domestic life that for a long time has been completely invisible. The *Killer on the Roof* episode emphasises the historical structural inequality perpetuated by the nature of this relation and the need for its re-consideration. In this way, the representation of Francina, and her contrast with Lebo, works against the grain of the *complete* historical silencing of this subjectivity. The critique that follows, therefore, seeks not merely to condemn the representation of Francina but rather to contribute to the discourse of the new South Africa by making conscious that which is

unconscious, in the style of Mudimbe's third level of discourse. It also serves to illustrate the nature of nationalist discourse, which in the process of imagining roles for individuals in the community silences elements of their existence and particularly their struggles, in the service of a unifying imaginary.

In other words, in order to fulfill the imagined trajectory of the new nation, it is necessary to gloss over material struggles and inequalities in order for the bigger picture of contemporary South Africa to be one of reform and recovery from apartheid's legacies. For the discourse to have its cohesive power, it must silence aspects of the lived experience of individuals, especially those that run against the grain of the discourse. It is pertinent to note, as the exploration of this stereotype proceeds, what the elements of the existence are that are silenced. New systems of signification emerge as new orthodoxies governing representation gain momentum in fundamental ways. What becomes apparent as all of the characters are analysed and their contexts explored, is that race, class and gender, central schemas of the apartheid regime, still persist not only as signifiers in the post-apartheid discourse but also as contemporary determinants of existence.

The stereotype at work in the character of Francina is one that has its origins in the apartheid era. The domestic worker has always been a powerful player in some aspects of inter-racial relations in South Africa. Jacklyn Cock (1980: 231) noted, in her ethnography of domestic work that the institution of domestic service is 'in a very real sense a microcosm of the exploitation and inequality on which the entire social order is based' (see also Whisson & Weil: 1971: 45). Moreover, situated at the central point of convergence of race, class and gender, three axes of difference along which social inequality is structured, domestic workers historically have been characterized by their 'ultra-exploitability' (Cock: 1980: 232).

Domestic Workers: a History

In her study of the history of domestic work in Zambia, Karen Hansen demonstrates the structural implications of the domestication of the local population as servants (in this context it was *men* and not *women* who worked in the home). This was part of the colonial enterprise and the process of bringing the continent under colonial control. In South Africa, the need of the mining industry for a supply of labor was a significant factor in the entrenchment of domestic work as more appropriate for women. This, as Van Onselen (1982), Gaitskell, *et al* (1983) and Bozzoli (1991) respectively explore, was due to and supplemented by the coincidence of a series of complex cultural factors that lead to the consolidation of black women as domestic workers in this country. As the structure of

apartheid became stricter and the legal framework more controlling in the 1970s, increasing emphasis was placed on the coercion of women, and stricter laws controlling their movement and rights were imposed. The migrant-labour system increased rural women's dependence on wages as it deprived them of their traditional means of subsistence and domestic work became one of very few options. (Wolpe: 1980; Boddington: 1984; Preston-Whyte: 1991). Domestic work came under scrutiny in the 1980s, as academics deployed Marxist-feminist analysis to critique the inequities of apartheid. The emphasis in this scholarship, then, is on the structure of domestic work and its service of white capital (See, as well as those mentioned above, Abrams: 1986: 14, and Walker: 1982: 4-10).

The presence of the domestic worker deep inside the most intimate space of the white home renders this relationship particularly symbolic of the nature of race relations of apartheid. In *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia: The Economics of Masters and Servants*, Duncan Clarke (1974: 38) characterizes this relationship as paternalistic. The frequent usage of 'payment in kind' – free accommodation in a back-room, or the provision of left-overs to eat – places the domestic worker and the family in whose home she works in a hierarchical relationship. Not only is the worker reliant on the benevolence of her employer, but she is subject to her whims and expected to be grateful for inferior food and accommodation. Cock argues that '[i]t consigns the worker to a dependent and powerless position and it generates a sense of power and superiority in the employer' (1980: 100).

A set of 'tacit rules' (Hansen: 1980: 9) that emerged to govern the relationship, include the terms of address. The domestic worker was (and in many instances still is) addressed by her Western first name. Employers rarely knew the full, original name of their domestic employee (Cock 1980: 137). Alternatively, she was referred to as 'the girl', while the employer was deferentially addressed as 'madam', again enforcing the superiority of the employer over the domestic worker (Whisson & Weil: 1971: 38). Cock also explores the discursive implication of referring to the domestic worker as 'one of the family' – as a way of masking the stark oppression inherent in the relationship (Cock: 1980: 132). By constructing her as an intimate, the social responsibility of politeness, for instance, is negated. These strategies of oppression were not always conscious. In fact, much of the research reveals a lack of awareness of the structural implications of these elements of the domestic worker paradigm. So totalising was the apartheid state, its structures and the discursive construction of its subjects, that the servant-employer relationship was never even imagined by its perpetrators outside of the particular class-race dialectic upon which such conspicuous social inequality rested.

A final important aspect of the historical character of the domestic worker paradigm is the effect of the workers' removal into the urban space and isolation from their families and social networks of support and socialisation in the home of their employers. Live-in domestic workers under apartheid were most often not allowed visitors, including husbands or children, in their back rooms (see Whisson & Weil: 1971: 24). 'The picture that emerges from the domestic workers' long working hours and family circumstances is that they experience a considerable deprivation of family life' (Cock: 1980: 52). A recurring theme in the scholarship dealing with the politics of domestic work is the implications for domestic workers' own children of their mothers' removal to the urban, white household (Makosana: 1989, Le Roux: 1995: 31, Radebe: 1996: 30). In *We Have Families Too: Live-in Domestic Workers Talk About Their Lives*, Tessa Le Roux explores the experiences of domestic workers as mothers, their position of caretakers and sole breadwinners for children with whom they had (or have) limited contact, emphasising the interrelationship between family and work. She notes the political, economic and social position of domestic workers that necessitates the separation of the mother-child unit (1995: 31). The high levels of emotional strain and anxiety experienced by mothers who are forced to live and work a great distance from their children is a broad theme that recurs in the testimonies of individuals interviewed for anthropological investigation of domestic work.

In the post-apartheid context a significant shift in the structure of the domestic-worker/employer relationship is the emergence of black employers, who have altered the terms of the paradigm significantly. In "The Employment of Domestic Workers by Black Urban Households" Margo Russell makes a poignant description of some of the elements of the relationship that change in this context: a domestic worker is addressed in a black household as *umncedi*⁷, (or as *sisi*⁸ or *u anti*⁹ by the children) and not as 'maid' as in white households (2000: 24). This terminology:

suggests working alongside household members who are themselves getting on with their own domestic chores; it suggests being included in the household's collective labour ... A contract would be out of place with a helper. Help may be rewarded or reciprocated but it is not paid by the hour. (2000: 24)

⁷ Helper.

⁸ Sister.

⁹ Auntie

The post-apartheid discourse has given priority to addressing the material needs of the historically disadvantaged citizens of South Africa, as discussed above. Since the early 1990s a number of legal measures have been implemented, which are designed to provide protection from the paradigm of exploitation and deprivation that results from the history of this institution, as outlined above. These include, *inter alia*, the Employment Equity Act of 1998, the Skills Development Act of 1998, the introduction of the minimum wage in 2002 and the establishment of the Unemployment Insurance Fund in 2004. The discourse of amelioration is rationalized in the form of this legal framework, but the material access to the resources embodied in this framework has been shown, by Shireen Ally, in her article, "Domestic Labour Pains," to be minimal (2004: 51). John Pape notes in his article, "Still Serving the Tea: Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe 1980 – 1990," that 'nearly all black urban households, regardless of their class, became employers of domestic workers during the 1980s. The union and government legislation were not created to handle a domestic sector of this nature' (1993: 394). Thus the new reforms could not meet the needs of the most oppressed domestic workers who were working for black, middle and lower income employers. The deprivation that is inherent in the historical structure of the racial relations embodied in the domestic worker practice may no longer be structured along only racial lines and may no longer be legally authorized by apartheid laws, but still persists as an outcome of domestic work, a Ruth Carroll points out in her article on the persistence of the apartheid structures of domestic work: "The New Madams and the Old Eves"(2004: 10).

Conclusions

That *Mma* Francina is employed by a black woman, who has risen up the social economic hierarchy, enabling her to employ a domestic worker, says more about the willingness of a new black elite to be a part of the capitalist economy than it does about any significant or fundamental change in the inherently asymmetrical structure of post-apartheid society. One class or group is still privileged and able to employ another to do their housework. The more personal terms of address used by employer and employee, moreover, do not dramatically alter the unequal dynamic that underpins the relationship between servant and employer. Both *Mma* Francina and Lebo (who works for a white 'madam') are domestic workers and not employers, inheriting the inequality founded on the racial schema under apartheid. While women such as Denzela are signifiers of new possibilities in economic terms, *Mma* Francina's position in Denzela's kitchen, working for low wages, represents a degree of continuity with the past. As Cock notes, the leitmotif of the domestic worker being 'part of the family' is an old and recurring theme amongst white employers, albeit that

this may change slightly in its mediation through 'black cultural' signifiers or terms of address such as *Mma*.

What we have seen is how *Zero Tolerance* has harnessed signifiers from apartheid in order to construct the imaginary of a 'new' South Africa that has addressed the history of inequality and oppression of the system of apartheid itself. The domestic worker was a stereotype of apartheid South Africa that has been harnessed in the new context to signify this break with the past and a new, better future. As has been revealed, the construction of the domestic worker/employee relation in post-apartheid persists in its oppression of women working as domestic workers. Although the relation is no longer only constructed along the racial schema of apartheid, its unequal effects are experienced in terms of gender and class, two important elements of the unequal structures of apartheid. This illustration is congruent with Meg Samuelson's argument that the post-apartheid nation continues to be constructed using the signifier of women's bodies in problematic ways (2005: 2).

In other words, the body of the domestic worker is harnessed in *Zero Tolerance* to signify the amelioration of the history of apartheid in the new South Africa. This process involves the silencing and erasure of elements of struggle and deprivation that persist despite the structuring of a new discourse of substantive equality. In this way, the discourse of the new South African nationalism is imagined using the bodies of some of its subjects, here illustrated by the case of domestic workers, in particular ways that silence elements of their experience in the service of the unifying rhetoric. What I hope the investigation in this chapter achieves, as I have discussed above, is the process of making conscious this unconscious silencing of the material existence of domestic workers in post-apartheid South Africa, for the purpose of enriching and strengthening the discourse. In this way it may indeed have the effect it intends – of ameliorating the suffering of those people historically disadvantaged by apartheid.

‘Autobiography at some level is always about secrets
and lying, visibility and invisibility’ (Sarah Nuttall:
2001: 135)

This chapter is an analysis of the self-representations of Hilary and Sara Blecher constructed in the show. This mother and daughter team are responsible for the creation of *Zero Tolerance*. I am reading within the context of the field of ‘autobiographics’, which I will explain and which is based on the conversations I had with both of them as part of my research. These conversations with Hilary and Sara gave them an opportunity to articulate their understanding of the characters and their relationship to them and to the show in general. This provides a lens through which to read the representations in the show as an expression of the national discourse and of individual subjectivity. That is, we see here the intersection of the discourse and the subjectivity of Sara in the form of Denzela – a consciously constructed representation, as she told me, of her own subjectivity: ‘I think Denzela was actually, to be honest, largely based on me. I mean a lot of her back-story was my back-story’ (Sara Blecher: Conversation: August 2005). In this way, the contingent nature of the relationship between individual subjectivities and discourse is illustrated. This chapter, then, is positioned at the intersection of identity studies, the theory of autobiographical knowledge production construction, or what Leigh Gilmore (1994: 41) refers to as *autobiographics*, and the cultural studies approach to discourse outlined above.

Questions of Cultural Identity

Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay’s collection on *Questions of Cultural Identity* (1996) was published on the basis of a series of seminars on cultural identity and theories of identity and their increasing influence on contemporary social sciences. The collection includes a suggestive introduction by Hall and Du Gay, which I have used extensively in my theorisation of identity for this paper and then chapters in the collection by such important identity theorists and critics as Homi Bhabha, discussing liminality, borders and ‘the in-between’ (1996: 53-60); Lawrence Grossberg, on the future of identity theory and the need for a shift in emphasis (1996: 87-108) and others, such as Simon Frith, James Donald and Marilyn Strathern discussing more specific cases of music (Frith: 1996: 108-127), literature (Donald: 1996: 170-190) and reproductive technology (Strathern: 1996: 37-52) respectively. The introduction and second chapter historicise identity theory and cultural studies, and situate the collection within the tradition of what Grossberg refers to as ‘anti-

essentialist' thinkers, theorising identity in the context of a broadly Foucauldian approach to identity, culture and power (Grossberg: 1996: 89). Identity, as understood through the lens of this book, and in my analysis, is contingent, fluid and unstable.

Sarah Nuttall's work, profoundly influenced by this school of identity and cultural studies, is central to the general approach taken here to the discourse of post-apartheid South Africa and cultural studies in this context. In *Writing the Now* she suggests original and localised approaches to theorisation of public culture and particularly of the determinant role of race and class:

[i]n asking how to locate the 'now' in contemporary South Africa, we have to ask the question, When and how does race matter? Here we might reflect on the fact that race appears to be hardening in the public political realm precisely as legalized racism has been abolished ... This hardening is taking place at the same time as more choices are becoming available in terms of racial identification, especially in the sphere of culture. The pragmatics of 'non-racialism' or 'cross-over culture' are now expressed through other vehicles, and in particular through powerful new media cultures and the market. There is, as yet, only the beginning of new work and theorization of these or post-racial configurations, which invigorate the political utopias of these terms... (2004A: 378-379)

This fits well with Grossberg's discussion of the theorisation of cultural identity-construction as a process involving more complex power-relations than simply the structural one constructed along racial lines in apartheid South Africa:

'[c]ultural studies needs to move beyond models of oppression, both the 'colonial model' of the oppressor and the oppressed, and the 'transgression model' of oppression and resistance. Cultural studies needs to move towards a model of articulation as 'transformative practice', as a singular becoming of community. Both models of oppression are not only inappropriate to contemporary relations of power, they are also incapable of creating alliances; they cannot tell us how to interpolate various fractions of the population in different relations to power into the struggle for change... (1996: 88)

The kinds of narratives of identity-construction that emerge out of a reading of *Zero Tolerance* as an expression of the complex individual subjectivities of the makers of the show is an example of how this plays itself out in contemporary South African public culture.

What is crucial to understand is the significance of the fact that Denzela, a black character, is a representation, for Sara, of her own subjectivity, which is nevertheless structurally determined in many ways by her whiteness. This suggests that for some people, it is no longer relevant to discuss identity-construction totally in terms of the racial schema that has traditionally dominated any

discussion of culture and identity. This 'de-familiarised' approach to race in post-apartheid South Africa mirrors the disruption of stereotypes that I identified earlier. *Familiar* categories and signifiers, are deployed and then unsettled through practices of representation that are part of the construction of new orthodoxies. These are simultaneously articulations of individual subjectivities. Thus a reading of the autobiographics of Sara in the form of Denzela and of Hilary, in our shared conversation, is also a reading of the discourse itself and the manner in which it is interrogated by individual identification processes.

Reading the Conversations

The reading of the conversations between myself and Sara and Hilary that have been made here as supplementary to the text of the show itself, has been given form and taken its methodology from the approach to oral texts outlined by Ciraj Rassool in his PhD thesis, "The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa":

In this interdisciplinary setting of cultural studies ... oral sources are also considered as texts. More than simply a storage system for data or remembrances about hidden or undiscovered pasts, these texts are important for the meanings they contain, their relation with the world that produced them and the processes and relations that went into their production. ... It is through cultural studies as a cross-disciplinary space that different forms of expressive activity and representation can be examined. (Rassool:2004: 1/2)

This is a useful approach, which I have followed in using both the show and my conversations as texts, which enable an exploration of the post-apartheid South African nationalist discourse.

Denzela

'We did conceive of Denzela to be the moral core of the series and in a funny way like of the whole country. Each episode there's a big moral dilemma that she's gotta make a moral choice one way or the other and she always makes the right choice'. (Sara Blecher: Conversation: August 2005)

In a quote cited further above Sara makes it clear that Denzela is a representation of herself. She spoke about how Denzela had the same back-story as her and Sara illustrates the close link between her own subjectivity and Denzela's character in that statement. In this quote here Sara is making a different comment about Denzela – she stands for the new nation. In this way Denzela is made to stand for the self, Sara, and also at once for the nation. It is significant, in this light, that Denzela is a black woman made to represent a white woman and it is for the very reason of the desire for an intimate relationship with the nation and its discourse that she *had* to be black. A direct

representation of Sara's white middle-class subjectivity would *not* stand as a representation of the nation. The discourse, in the face of the terrible history of racism in this country, privileges blackness as a signifier of newness and the utopian ideal. The emerging black elite shares class status with Sara and so her story about single motherhood was easily transferred. Sara was however aware that if she wished to remain relevant in the new discourse she would have to code herself as a signifier of blackness. Hilary used slightly different strategies, as will be seen in a detailed analysis of my conversation with her (which is productive and relates specifically to her subjectivity, while the show reflects *Sara* specifically) to construct herself using signifiers of this new, fashionable blackness.

Denzela, then, is a construction of Sara's subjectivity that has been modified to also be a representation of the moral core of the nation, learning to deal with the transformation process. However, an episode, *Muti Murder Central*, in which Denzela is making love with one of her colleagues, seems to jar with Sara's construction of Denzela as the moral core of the series. This scene is intercut with four other locations – all the scenes taking place simultaneously. In one, a man (suspected of murdering his child as a sacrifice to the Gods) is being attacked by an angry mob and then burnt to death in his hut. Denzela has come to Limpopo province to investigate this child's death and has undertaken to protect the suspect from the suspicious and threatening local people. In another parallel scene this man's sister is knocking frantically and with increasing urgency at Denzela's door at the hotel. In the third location, back in Johannesburg, Sakkie (her colleague) is telephoning again and again to try and get hold of Denzela to tell her about a development in the investigation. The final location is Denzela's empty hotel room, with the ringing telephone, the sound of the knocking and a drawing by her son, Siso, lying next to her empty bed. This drawing has come, during the course of the episode, to symbolise Denzela's failure to fulfil her duties as a mother. Siso drew it to be placed on Denzela's father's grave; she forgot to place it there when she went to his grave on her way to Limpopo. Whenever she has put her hand into her pocket during the episode she has found the picture and thought of Siso and we are reminded about her failure to place it on the grave.

The parallel editing begins slowly and as the love scene slowly builds to its climax the editing quickens and the cuts between the various locations become sharper and quicker until eventually she reaches orgasm and the scene climaxes as it cuts to the burnt out hut where the man has died. A link is thus established between Denzela's sexuality and the death of the man at the hands of the mob. She has failed as a protector. When Sakkie is unable to get hold of her she has abandoned her

job in favour of her desire. The empty room with Siso's picture signifies her setting aside of her motherhood to experience and enjoy intimacy with a man. She has also failed the now-dead man's sister who was relying on Denzela for comfort and security. In this way her sexuality is constructed as dangerous and a threat to all of the people relying on her. This is established through the use of editing as a signifier and suggests that there are particular needs placed on this woman – mothering, comforting, protecting, and investigating – but she has chosen to satisfy her own needs and this has disastrous consequences. She is in a sense punished for her selfishness.

When I suggested this reading of this episode to Sara she was quite adamant that it was not correct. (This illustrates that television texts are decoded in different ways by different audiences and so are contingent on the subjectivities of individual consumers.) Sara insisted that:

I didn't agree with that part of your paper [short paper with some elements of analysis of the show and approach included that I sent to Sara to read before interviewing her]... The Siso thing was a dilemma of the whole show. I think we overplayed that beat, with Siso. The problem is that when you are a working mother, that is always the tension – there aren't enough hours in the day. It was very real for me, and maybe too real so maybe we overplayed it. I didn't feel like that was a judgment ... the love scene between her and Vuyo was not her doing a wrong thing, it was her asserting her independence. (Sara Blecher: Conversation: August 2005)

Sara became a little defensive of Denzela. She revealed a profoundly personal link to the character in her fervent empathy with regard to justifying her actions in this episode. She did not want Denzela to be misunderstood as abandoning her responsibilities towards others when she was simply 'asserting her independence'. This is an important act of self-representation that Sara has made. She shows her attitude towards motherhood and the balancing of her own needs and desires with those around her and when she makes the statement about the moral core she shows that Denzela is entitled to be making love while these people need her. She has needs and desires that must be satisfied that are just as important as those of the people relying on her. This is an element of Sara's own subjectivity, with people making demands on her time. It expresses her own struggle to put up boundaries in her own life and to separate the satisfaction of her needs from the consequences. This is part of the subjectivity of a working mother that is Sara's experience of womanhood. The moral choices, then, that Denzela makes in each episode, reflect Sara's particular approach to morality. This is linked to the wider moral issues and dilemmas of the country in complex ways. 'That was all we knew. I grew up in a family of women and my mom as well. It's like, we just come from that – it's normal' (Sara Blecher: Conversation: August 2005). In this quote Sara illustrates a deep sense of identification with Denzela, who is also constructed as a

representative of the moral core of the nation. Sara shows, then, that just as she has made an unconscious moral choice about the demands on her of single motherhood, she also sees herself as deeply connected to the nation. That Denzela represents Sara and the nation suggests that Sara sees her identity as tied into the discursive construction of the nation, although at least to some extent she is aware of the problematic inherent in her white subjectivity and, for two reasons finds it easier to represent it as a black one. Firstly, a white subjectivity cannot be harnessed to signify the moral transformation of the post-apartheid nation, where blackness has become such an important signifier. The second reason is allied to the first; Sara is at least on some level aware that her whiteness exists in an uneasy relationship with the discourse of the new nation. The choice to represent herself as black is in a sense a manner of masking this uneasy relation and allowing herself to escape the questions of her subjectivity that persist as a hangover of the apartheid nation. These necessarily arise out of an interrogation of her relation to the new nation; if blackness has come to signify newness then whiteness must signify something else and Sara has chosen not to find out what.

Autobiographics

Leigh Gilmore's suggestive concept of *autobiographics*, in *Autobiographics, A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (1994), is particularly pertinent to my inter-disciplinary analysis of the conversations with Sara and Hilary. It is situated in, and reactive against dominant approaches to autobiography. In the introduction to his topical collection on autobiography entitled *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation* (1993), Robert Folkenflik states that 'autobiographies take the form of both written and oral narratives' (1993: 12) and this position echoes Gilmore's desire to contest those studies that privilege 'westernised' conceptions of autobiography. These Mary Watson describes, in her chapter in Folkenflik's volume, as suffering from a 'bios-bias' (Watson: 1993: 59). My own conception of autobiography is influenced by this open-ended formulation of the form as more than a mere written text within a specific literary genre, but rather more closely linked to Hall's concept of 'performativity' (Hall: 1996: 13). That is, that the self is endlessly produced and re-produced in the various strategies of stylisation of self and 'self-production' (Hall: 1996: 14) and may be read in the performances of identity made by any individual on a day-to-day basis. Autobiography, then, may be found in sites other than those authorised by the disciplined genre. *Zero Tolerance* itself is analysed as an autobiographical text in this chapter.

It is a highly problematic form (some would say genre) that encourages the asking of questions about fact and fiction, about the relations of reality and the text, about

origins. Is autobiography to be found in referentiality, textuality, or social construction? Is there a self in the text? The subject is radically in question. (Folkenflik: 1993: 11)

The subject that I examine and question in this paper is a female self and there are specific theoretical and political implications of this gender-focus. Gilmore argues that women are always already excluded from the autobiographic genre, which historically has been a signifier of patriarchal relations (Gilmore: 1994: 17). She argues, along the lines of Folkenflik and Watson, that the individual suggested by the self of biography and autobiography is always a 'modern', 'masculine' self, as constructed by the self of imperial discourse (Watson: 1993: 57). This discourse and its influence on autobiography have been contested using various strategies and approaches over the last four decades (see: Smith & Watson: 1992; Watson & Smith: 2002). The process of contesting the '*bios*-bias' that Watson describes as an always-already 'westernised' and 'modernised' (Watson: 1993: 58) one began most prominently in 1960 with the work of Roy Pascal. His book, *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, interrogated concepts of 'truth' and 'fact' and asked:

Not only does the reader expect truth from autobiography, but autobiographers themselves all make more or less successful efforts to get at the truth, to stick to it, or at least try to persuade us they are doing so ... We have then to define what sort of truth is meant, and this we can discover only in relation to the author's general intention. It will not be an objective truth, but the truth in the confines of a limited purpose. (Pascal: 1960: 83)

Pascal's argument was ground-breaking in the sense that it contested the complete authority of the autobiographical text and its idea of 'truth'. This was famously followed some years later by the publication of a special edition of *New Literary History*, entitled *Self Confrontation and Social Vision* (1977) in which John Sturrock (1977: 51-63), Philippe Lejeune (1977: 27-50) and Louis Renza (1977: 1-26) made significant contributions and revisions of the theory of autobiography by contesting the patriarchal and imperial implications of the assumed subject of autobiography. Watson argues, however, that albeit that they continued to perpetuate the '*bios*-bias', the revisions inherent in this journal publication (and the subsequent and significant contributions of Spengemann: 1980 and Eakin: 1985 on previously marginalised autobiographers and ideas in autobiography) did serve to highlight the implications of the notion of the 'subject' (Watson: 1993: 61). Although they attempted to address the silence around women's and other marginal voices, they continued to focus on the same 'western' sites of production, re-reading the work of Sartre and

Descartes among others, rather than approaching the marginalised voices their theory suggested that they might (Watson: 1993: 61).

Although the revisions made by Sturrock and Lejeune and others in the late 1970s have been criticised for failing to deliver on the promise of what Watson describes as an 'anti-metaphysical' (Watson: 1993: 57) theory of autobiography, they served the important function of suggestively pointing to the implications for the field of post-structural and post-modern approaches to literature and culture. The redefinition of the autobiography is ongoing; small focussed studies that concern themselves with voices that previously would not have been considered 'autobiography' continue to emerge (see Lionnet: 1991; Raynaud: 1992; Beverley: 1992; and in South Africa: Daymond: 1995; Thale: 1995).

Gilmore argues that even the contemporary approaches to autobiography that have accommodated the post-colonial and post-structural kinds of criticisms discussed here continue to render women's autobiography marginal to the genre and so she seeks to broaden the genre and de-centre the masculine self of autobiography (Gilmore: 1994: 42). She makes a feminist critique and suggests that in order to place the female 'I' firmly within such a tradition the genre must be re-defined to include expressions of identity that do not fit into the traditional understanding of the autobiographic form and confront the notion of 'self' with its others in order to problematise the paradigm that authorises certain voices to speak in autobiography (Gilmore: 1994: ix). The argument about the silencing of women in the genre of autobiography links in specific ways to the general basis upon which Watson wishes to construct an 'anti-metaphysical' theory of autobiography. Feminist theorists (Smith: 1987; 1997; Watson & Smith: 2002; Stanton: 1987; Heilbrun: 1988) argue that women's voices are erased not only specifically by the discourse of autobiography but by the conception of 'life' that is contained within that paradigm. Inherent in this conception is a teleological understanding of what constitutes life and achievement and the 'greatness' required to make a subject worthy of autobiography. They argue that women cannot easily fit into this category by virtue of their positioning in society according to patriarchal norms that limit their existence and visibility.

The approach of this chapter to *Zero Tolerance* and the conversations with its makers as *autobiographical* texts is made possible by the feminist struggle to de-centre the 'I' of the dominant autobiographical text and thus to de-stabilise the genre itself and allow for marginal utterances to be heard. The texts under analysis in this chapter are produced by women, speaking of and for

themselves. They are not non-fictional literary works, but new kinds of texts altogether – a television show and recorded conversations. In the process of identity-construction, of situating women at the centre of the stage of identity performance, a particular subjectivity has been carved out, however, which masks its own silences, draws on contextually constructed signifiers and carries its own teleological assumptions about life and value. The construction, as I have shown, of the Denzela character is twofold: she represents the subjectivity of Sara Blecher as a single, working mother and she represents the shared subjectivity of the nation in transformation, navigating a new field of identity construction and trying to find the path to a prosperous future. Inherent in these constructions are silences and utterances that reflect the subjectivity of Sara as a white middle-class woman. Firstly, the tale of her own whiteness and its significance in the post-apartheid state is entirely effaced – by coding herself as black she has avoided many of the deeply challenging questions facing *white* South Africans in post-apartheid. Sara represents herself as part of the nation and indeed part of all that is best about the nation; black women are an important signifier of the amelioration of oppression of apartheid in post-apartheid South Africa. As they suffered the worst levels of material deprivation and discursive silencing, their upliftment in the post-apartheid discourse signifies the destruction of highly oppressive historical structures, central to the utopian trajectory of the discourse of the new nation. In this way Sara effaces that which may challenge her conception of herself as part of this new nation by using this signifier that is not only central to the positive aspects of the new nation but also is in many ways pre-constructed as opposite to her own whiteness. The silences, then, that are inherent in the patriarchal construction of the ‘I’ of autobiography are not entirely confronted by the re-construction of this ‘I’ as a female self. There is inherent in the act of speaking of the self the structure of silence and erasure in the construction of a coherent tale that casts that self as one kind of subject and necessarily erases other aspects of that subjectivity.

The subject and the form of autobiography are nonetheless destabilised in the reading of autobiographies that is set in motion in this paper. What remains of autobiography, as a strategy of telling as revealed in the analysis that follows, is the organisation of the life-story into a unified and coherent tale. This is particularly true of Hilary, and the construction of her subjectivity, which is executed in her conversation with me. The ‘purpose’ that ‘grows out of the author’s life and imposes itself on his life as his (*sic*) specific quality and thus determines his choice of events and the manner of his treatment and expression’ (Pascal: 1960: 83) is a construction of herself as avant garde in television and theatre production in South Africa. Hilary imposes a particular comprehensive narrative over her life as a pioneering and influential producer of public culture in

this country. This personal teleology links in profound ways to the discourse of the post-apartheid nation; Hilary conceives of her identity *in relation to* the nation and not independently of it. Indeed the very unity that she gives her life-story in the conversation I had with her is based on her perceived relation with *and influence on* the nation. This, show Nuttall & Michael (2000: 298), is a common theme of autobiography in post-apartheid South Africa. So pervasive is the discourse of nation, they argue, that it is a central organiser of the autobiographical narratives that they read and this provides insight into processes of identity construction in this context and their necessary link with the narrative of the construction of the nation.

Autobiography in Post-Apartheid South Africa

A consideration of autobiographical acts in the post-apartheid period must include a sense of the pluralities that have come with the opening of the public sphere in South Africa. There will not only be multiple ways of telling the stories of the self in public but the possibility that people will resort to quite other forms than those they have used in the past. Although written autobiographies in the post-apartheid period have been many, various and increasingly diverse, this new plurality in the public sphere may also mean the end of hegemony of the political, and the literary as narrative form. (Nuttall & Michael: 2000: 317)

The history of apartheid that informs the cultural landscape of contemporary South Africa is deeply implied in all aspects of life in this space at this time. In the introduction to his collection on South African Literature, *Rendering Things Visible: Essays on South African Literary Culture*, in 1995, Martin Trump suggested the intricate links between the pending end of the political state of apartheid and the state of South African literature: 'processes of socio-political democratization in South Africa are beginning to be reflected in a democratization of critical concerns and practices' (Trump: 1995: xiii). Literary studies, then, must be localized and take the structural history of apartheid into account. Sarah Nuttall has made consistently useful and suggestive insights into post-apartheid South Africa and cultural studies in this space and has even written specifically on the subject of autobiography.

Nuttall and Cheryl Ann Michael discuss the impact of the nationalist discourse on autobiographical acts embodied in traditional literary texts, television shows and other forms (2000: 298). This is useful for the purpose of this paper, which examines *Zero Tolerance* as an act of self-representation, an autobiographical act in the ways illustrated above. Nuttall and Michael examine notions of individuality, intimacy and nationhood in relation to these texts and suggest that the individual is

subsumed by the nation-building project, at the expense of intimacy, although the discourse suggests that intimacy and honesty hold the key to 'personal healing' and national healing through the individual healing processes as well (2000: 307). The historical question of this effect of displacing the individual in favor of the needs of the struggle for liberation from the oppressive apartheid government is shared by Thomas Thale who, in his article, "Paradigms Lost? Paradigms Regained: Working-Class Autobiography in South Africa," examines the autobiographies of four apartheid activists and demonstrates that 'they negotiate their subject positions from what is reconcilable with their identities as trade unionists cum activists' (1995: 613). Nuttall and Michael also look in some detail at the history of autobiography in South Africa over the last two decades. They argue that:

South African autobiographies written before the first democratic elections in this country are, as we might expect, preoccupied with the future – with the emergence of the non-racial and post-apartheid nation. 'The future' is explicitly tied to 'nation', and in its manifestation as such it offers a potential space of healing and freedom. The terms of both 'healing' and 'freedom', however, are ambivalent[...] the new nation will provide a space to finally be one's self, free from the commitments required by a collective struggle. On the other hand, this need to carve a space for the self will not be necessary since this will be a nation in which self-expression and individual human rights will be respected and provided for. This ambivalence about what healing and freedom might mean is linked to an ambivalence about selfhood and its singularity. (Nuttall & Michael: 2000: 300)

The decade after 1994, they suggest, is still tied into political and public problems associated with apartheid, but the emphasis and construction of the self has shifted. They discuss the impact on the modes of speaking encouraged at the TRC and echo Fiona Ross's observation of the privileging of victimhood and its construction of a particular register of self-representation. This form of autobiographical construction, which occupied the national imaginary prominently and for an extended period, privileged speaking that was connected to the nation and to its discourse of healing and growth. The self, then, was constructed as profoundly linked to the nation in the rhetoric of self-speaking that was officially sanctioned by the TRC.

Thus notions of individual and collective, victimhood and agency, emerge in new forms in a context in which the political struggle for democracy has ended but the new nation must be built [...] In the 1990s with the arrival of that longed-for moment, a new investment is made in examining the past. Healing and freedom now mean revisiting the trauma of the apartheid past, in order to lay it to rest and in order to achieve forgiveness but not forgetting. (Nuttall & Michael: 2000: 308)

The self-representation inherent in *Zero Tolerance* and the interviews conducted with its makers, who speak also through the show, is tied into the discourse of South African nationalism discussed at length above and identified by Nuttall and Thale respectively. The trajectory of healing through unification is given substance in the construction of subjectivities that are contingent on their relationship with the nation and its discursive trajectory. The women interviewed here harness this discourse in their public construction of their identities, at once defined by their position in the national story and validated by their association with it. This fits well with Gilmore's contention that:

Whether and when autobiography emerges as an authoritative discourse of reality and identity, and any particular texts appear to tell the truth, have less to do with that text's presumed accuracy about what really happened than with its apprehended fit into culturally prevalent discourses of truth and identity. (Gilmore: 1994: ix)

In order therefore to be taken seriously as a television show or a television producer in post-apartheid South Africa, the pressure is felt to conform to a view of identity that sees it as constructed on the basis of the discourse of nation that legitimises it.

Hilary's Autobiographics

A serious intellectual effort to understand how whiteness in South Africa has been imagined and practiced is also needed. (Nuttall & Michael: 1999: 57)

Speaking about contemporary cultural studies in South Africa, Nuttall and Michael make the point that traditionally studies of race focus on the 'victims' of racism and that in the post-apartheid context it is necessary to look also at the effect on the subjectivities of *whiteness* of the transition and of contemporary race relations (1999: 57). *Zero Tolerance* and the conversations with its creators provide a useful insight into such a subjectivity, which is examined in some detail here. The autobiographic strategies performed by Hilary in the conversation I had with her attempted to construct herself as avant garde, that is: pioneering, influential, taking risks and making important contributions to the history of theatre and television production in South Africa. The analysis that follows is a critique of the autobiographical practices in Hilary's conversation with me that constructed herself as avant garde and in the process silenced and erased elements of her history and particularly her experience of (and contribution to) apartheid. Indeed at one point she claimed:

you know the other thing that's very interesting that might be interesting for you is when I came to the Market Theatre there were no traditions in South Africa theatre ... but one didn't really know what South African Theatre was or what we were gonna do so we had to invent it and I think that just taught me that you have to and you could

invent – there were actually no rules. (Conversation with Hilary Blecher: November 2005)

This statement illustrates Hilary's desire to position herself in relation to the nation and also as influential on the construction of discourse in that space. She is placing herself on the 'cutting edge' and thereby trying to affirm her continued relevance and importance in the post-apartheid South African context that no longer privileges white women as signifiers of progressiveness but now privileges blackness as a signifier – threatening to render her irrelevant. Hilary fabricates a position for herself in the post-apartheid state, echoed by Sara's self-representation in the show as a black woman, that centralises their experience and subjectivity and explores elements of this identity, while ignoring the structural implications of their whiteness.

The conversation with Hilary began as a friendly one between two women with a sense of shared subjectivity. By the end of the meeting I felt angry with Hilary. She had betrayed the sensitivity with which I try to understand and construct my *own* post-apartheid subjectivity. I, too, wish to be part of the new South African nation, but felt that Hilary had not been honest with herself about her history as a white woman in this space. Implied in her whiteness is privilege, or indeed possible culpability for the oppressive structure of the state. If, I felt, she wishes to be part of the transformed nation, she must be honest and allow herself to be transformed – not simply signified as such in a fantasy version of herself produced for our conversation. This anger is a reflection of my own defensiveness about my own whiteness. The extraordinarily privileged life that I have led and the structural advantage that I have enjoyed are a burden *only* in the sense that they imply some level of culpability on my own part for the structural disadvantage suffered on the other end of the scale of my existence. As Denzela refused to see her structural culpability for the death of Zinzi's child, Hilary refuses to see her structural culpability in the history of apartheid and I wish to have earned my place in this nation not simply by having a voice to speak it, but by being a part of its growth and transformation in a real, not a fabricated way. The construction of the post-apartheid nation as articulated in the TRC and discussed at length above privileges victimhood as providing authority to speak in the post-apartheid space. I have been victim of no structure of apartheid, in fact quite the contrary, I have benefited directly. I must thus find ways other than harnessing the signifiers of the utopian ideal to render my subjectivity relevant and useful to the post-apartheid South African nation.

In her discussion of the *Y Generation* in "Stylising the Self: The Y Generation in Rosebank, Johannesburg", Sarah Nuttall discusses the stylisation of the self using race, particularly blackness,

as a signifier. She identifies: ‘a process of accessorisation that is marked by race, albeit race constantly remixed’ (2004B: 450). In this essay, Nuttall theorizes the re-construction of blackness as a sartorial signifier. That is, blackness has come to be used to signify fashion and style – it is no longer only a political symbol of struggle or deprivation or more generally African-ness, it has come to signify style. She identifies in the production of the *Yfm* brand in Rosebank in Johannesburg the re-mixing of blackness and the history of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa as sartorial, rather than political signifiers. It has become fashionable, she shows, to be black. References to Steve Biko in photographs stuck onto the front of T-shirts are no longer coded as resistance images, but now become signifiers of fashion and ‘hipness’. Hilary harnesses these signifiers of hip-ness in ways that are suggestive of her desire to be avant garde and fashionable now, as she claims to have been in the 1970s and onward. Hilary calls on this blackness in several ways as an accessory to her self-representation read here. This is most obviously illustrated in the usage of a black woman instead of a white one as the self-representation in the show: ‘it was always important from the very beginning that we looked from the woman’s experience and it had to be a black woman in this country’ (Hilary Blecher: Conversation: November 2005). She consciously states that in order to be relevant in post-apartheid South Africa the show *had* to make reference to the discourse of transition by carrying a *black* central character and not a white woman.

When Hilary and I had our conversation in November 2005 she arranged for our meeting to take place at the offices of the production company, which shares the production of the show with Hilary and Sara. *Ochre Productions* is in the newly developed part of the central business district in Johannesburg: Newtown. The offices are in Quinn Street, right at the heart of Newtown, situated amongst new trendy nightclubs, galleries and businesses in Johannesburg. The office was mostly populated with young, black South Africans, wearing the kind of clothing discussed by Nuttall in her essay on stylisation and Hilary was wearing a pair of *bling*¹⁰ Chanel sunglasses among other accessories that signified youth and sartorial hip-ness. From here Hilary told the story of her past, including positioning herself in what she considered to be important and influential movements, proudly mentioning her time in ‘America’ as influencing her avant garde approaches in South Africa:

... when I came to *Isidingo* all the women [characters] were Barbie dolls or doormats – that’s how I described it – and when I left *Isidingo* everybody said to me ‘the problem with *Isidingo* is all the men are wimps and all the women are so powerful’ and

¹⁰ Diamond-encrusted, or at least apparently so.

that really happened while I was there. I didn't realise to what extent that had happened, like Ma Agnes, all the characters became very strong whereas before it was Grey Hofmeyr, you know, a real macho men's thing, you know women don't really fit. And this was, coming from America this was horrific, you know, because in America women are very strong. That was always important to me, you know, and it was always important from the very beginning (*of Zero Tolerance*) that we looked from the woman's experience and it had to be a black woman in this country. And that was still a first at that stage as well'. (Hilary Blecher: Conversation: 2005)

This is followed by a comment on *Zero Tolerance* to explain the relative lack of popularity with audiences:

I think people found, um, it's very sophisticated. And if you look at the third series, the third series is even more sophisticated. It looks like an overseas show ... it's hard viewing ... I think it's quite an intelligent audience ... I think lots of people who did appreciate it saw that it was a pioneer. (Hilary Blecher: Conversation: November 2005)

Conclusion

The emphasis is placed once again on the show as pioneering. The unifying purpose around which Hilary has constructed the narrative of her life and therefore the show is one of pioneering influence; the avant garde. This is in an attempt to construct a white subjectivity that remains relevant in the post-apartheid state where blackness is privileged and whiteness, as Nuttall discusses in *Subjectivities of Whiteness* (Nuttall: 2001: 127), has to be reconfigured in order to remain viable and retain some cultural value. This is true of the white English subjectivities represented by Hilary and Sara and their articulations in the ways discussed above. This brings us to the subjectivity of the white Afrikaner that another character, Hannelie represents and that Rolanda Marais, the actress who plays her, attempts to construct. Again, I will be drawing on conversations with me about the show, this time with Rolanda. Using a similar approach of overlaying the conversational text on the representation in the show the chapter that follows will explore the representation of Hannelie and Rolanda's own conception of herself as an Afrikaner.

This third and final discussion chapter looks at the representation of Hannelie, the ‘gay cop’. This is overlaid with the testimony and self-representation of Rolanda Marais, the actress who plays her, in the conversation I shared with her. It was this representation that initially attracted my interest in *Zero Tolerance* as an expression of post-apartheid South African public discourse, challenging as it did the patriarchal orthodoxy of heterosexuality. As a homosexual woman myself I was immediately engaged by a representation of a young, fashionable, gay girl, like myself, who did not conform with the tropes of butchness or masculinity or misery that I was used to seeing. That she was also Afrikaans was equally challenging of historical tropes of representation. Indeed, as demonstrated by Vestergaard in “Who’s Got the Map? The Re-Negotiation of Afrikaner Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa”, Afrikaans culture is known for its history of conservatism and repression of homosexuality (2001: 20), which made this representation even more exceptional. Although homosexuality is not entirely unheard of on television, as Mark Gevisser (1994:19) pertinently points out in “A Different Fight for Freedom: A History of Lesbian and Gay Organization from the 1950s to the 1990s”, lesbians have even far *less* visibility in South African public culture than homosexual men do. The construction of this character, therefore, is particularly extraordinary. Hannelie is a beautiful young woman; she is amiable, clever and successful. She dresses in clothing that is feminine and she is treated with respect by her colleagues, even once they know she is actively engaged in a homosexual relationship. This, as will be shown, subverts the tropes of representation of female heterosexuality. What is more common in a hegemonically heterosexual society, is to portray female homosexuality as deeply threatening, often carrying with it what Shameem Kabir refers to in her essay on lesbian representation “The Castration of Lesbian Desire”, as the ‘castration of lesbian desire’ (1998: 40). Homosexual female representations are characterised by denial and deprivation. Women suffer as a result of their deviant sexuality. In *Zero Tolerance* I saw the first representation of a female homosexual who did not fit this stereotype. Indeed Hannelie is represented as having a happy life, with a loving relationship and over the course of the two seasons under discussion in this thesis, she gains more responsibility and is treated with increasing respect by the other members of the *Zero Tolerance* team.

The Binary

Hannelie challenges the tropes that have historically shaped the construction of homosexual women. This opening of the paradigm of representation of homosexual women is certainly echoed by a constitutional reversal of the historical oppression of homosexuals (men and women) in South

Africa. Homosexuality has become a signifier of the ideal trajectory of the nation discussed in detail above. ‘Tolerance of homosexuality’, suggest Neville Hoad, Karen Martin and Graeme Reid in their discussion of *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, ‘becomes an indicator of civilized modernity’ (2005: 15). This is most obviously observed in the form of Mudimbe’s second level of discourse (1994: xiii) where the banality of the day-to-day perpetuation and circulation of discourse is underwritten with the authority of rationality and discipline in the Constitution, a foundational document of the discourse of post-apartheid South Africa. The Constitution, in section 9, prohibits unfair discrimination on a number of grounds, which include, *inter alia*, gender, race and sexual orientation. A series of rulings has been made by the Constitutional Court, providing increasing recognition of rights accorded to homosexual relationships, culminating in *Fourie v Min. Home Affairs*, in 2006, in which it was determined that the statutory framework governing marriage in South Africa should be overhauled to make provision for homosexual people to be married and enjoy all of the benefits of this legal institution (*Fourie*: 2006: 556 E-F). In “Shaping Sexualities - Per(trans)forming Queer” Mikki Van Zyl, a homosexual South African woman and cultural critic, discusses how her own identity construction, and her treatment in and by the nation, was affected in material and tangible ways by these constitutional changes (2005: 19). Although this discursive opening may have led to controversy and public contestation of the validity of homosexual marriage, it entrenched homosexuality within the discourse of progressive nationalism as an important signifier. Homosexuals, along with those other groups that were victimised and oppressed by the apartheid system, are the groups whose well-being is now foregrounded as a signifier of the improved state of the (post-apartheid) nation. The de-criminalisation of sodomy is a good example of change. That it was once illegal for men to engage in physical relations with a member of the same sex and that it is now not only legal but possible for them to marry is an indication of the profound difference between conditions for homosexuals under apartheid and those that exist now.

All of this suggests that the post-apartheid discourse is constructed particularly with its antithesis, apartheid, in mind. Hannelie is analysed here as an illustration of this contrast in the form of a woman struggling with the change and the way it plays itself out in her subjective experience. She grew up a stereotypical Afrikaner, surrounded by all the tropes of this subjectivity: she was born on the *plaas* to a conservative family of church-going *boers*¹¹ who employed black labourers to work their farm and regarded them through the haze of a deeply racist ideology. She subsequently moved away from the countryside into the urban centre of Johannesburg and here she discovered that she is

¹¹ Farmers: the stereotypical name for rural, traditional Afrikaans people.

homosexual. Hannelie is forced to find a way to bridge the gap between her apartheid childhood and her post-apartheid adulthood, signified by her move from the trope of the rural to the urban space as well as from her Christian conservative background's approach to sexuality, to the tolerant openness of the urban space where she was able to discover her homosexuality.

This construction is played out in detail and illustrates the apartheid/post-apartheid opposition, represented as a binary, for example, in an episode entitled *Man in the Brown Suit*. Hannelie returns to her family home for her brother's wedding and struggles to deal with her new subjectivity and to find a way to fit into the old space of the *plaas*. This awareness of the binary of old/new, allied with the opposition of straight/gay, and also rural/urban is echoed by Rolanda Marais in the conversation I had with her about her experience of playing Hannelie for the show (Rolanda Marais: Conversation: November 2005). She perceived of the difference between Johannesburg, where the show was shot (on location) and Wellington, the small rural town where *she* grew up, as unsafe/safe respectively. She told me that she felt safe at home in Wellington, yet that despite feeling unsafe in Johannesburg, surrounded by many more black people than ever before, she enjoyed the feeling of challenge in the unsafe space and saw herself as a bridge between the two spaces. This attitude played itself out in her response to the invitation to play a homosexual character. Her father is a minister in the *NG Kerk*¹² and as such is deeply embedded in the conservative Christian values embodied by the traditions of Afrikaans culture (Vestergaard provides a useful historical description of the discursive construction and maintenance of Afrikaner culture during apartheid: 2001: 21)

Rolanda says (Conversation: November 2005) that when she was offered the role of Hannelie she felt it was an opportunity to rhetorically bring homosexuality to her small, traditionally Afrikaans town and family and to show them that it was a part of the new South Africa that they should get used to. She told me that she had introduced her father to some of her homosexual friends so that he would see that they were people too and so that he would spread the word of acceptance in the community. Rolanda constructed an active role for herself as guiding her Afrikaans community to confront elements of the post-apartheid discourse that seems so unsafe for them. I will be illustrating this in a discussion of the episode that embodies the construction of the binary and also Rolanda's navigation of it. Rolanda has a desire to remain 'safe' in the comfort of the stereotypes of the history of Afrikaans culture, while trying to bring this culture into the post-apartheid future.

¹² *Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk*: Dutch Reformed Church.

She promotes tolerance for difference as part of the ideal of unity and equality of the new South Africa. Rolanda makes use of homosexuality as a signifier of progress, and by trying to incorporate it into conservative Christian ideology she is attempting to harness it as a signifier of contemporary progress. However, the critique that can be made is that, instead of coming to terms with difference she is trying to incorporate difference into sameness and render homosexuality acceptable in this way.

Man in the Brown Suit

This episode opens with an argument between Hannelie and her girlfriend Sedika De Bruyn (played by Kim Engelbrecht). Sedika does not understand why Hannelie will not take her to her brother's wedding and tell her family that she is involved in an intimate relationship with a woman. Hannelie is already nervous about seeing her family and intent on hiding her new identity from them. The emotional distance between the two women does not seriously threaten their relationship and this is illustrated in the shots of Hannelie's reflection in the mirror alongside Sedika sitting on the bed in their bedroom. Although they cannot sit next to one another on the bed and share the burden of Hannelie's conservative ideological socialisation, yet they are at least not so distant from one another that they cannot be contained in the same frame together. However, the existence of some distance between Hannelie and Sedika throughout the episode expresses the discursive distance between Hannelie's family background and home and history from her contemporary existence and her love for this woman. While she is at the farm she finds it impossible to reach Sedika - her cell phone does not get a signal there – which serves to emphasise the discursive distance of the farm from Hannelie's everyday life; even modern technology has not reached this place still stuck in the past. Every time she tries to use the landline in the house, she finds herself interrupted and cannot achieve privacy to talk to her lover. This further distances them from each other and by the time Hannelie leaves at the end of the weekend they are embroiled in a serious fight.

The episode is highly symbolic in its visual construction of the farm. The first shot is of Hannelie arriving and shows her locked out of the property, unable to gain access, as a new, high gate and fence have been installed. This, explains Jan, a friend from her past, who eventually helps her gain access, is to protect the family from 'farm murders'. They feel isolated and scared in the post-apartheid climate. What they do not realize is that Hannelie represents much of what has changed from the days of apartheid and that their own daughter embodies much of what they fear. Throughout the duration of her stay, Hannelie tries to find ways to talk to her mother or father about

her new lover and her new life, but she eventually decides that this is impossible and emotionally abandons her family and any intimacy she may once have had with them in favour of intimacy with Sedika. This in itself is a challenging representation of a homosexual woman who abandons her family in favour of a subversive relationship and in this process finds happiness.

The episode carries a representation of the conservative Afrikaans subjectivity that is severely under threat in the post-apartheid discourse. A sniper has been shooting men dead in the street with no apparent link between his victims apart from the fact that they are black. Eventually it becomes clear that this sniper sees himself as fulfilling some kind of prophecy and it is Hannelie's old friend who helps her to solve the crime – he receives a pamphlet from a cult group who believe that *Die Man in Die Bruin Pak*; The Man in the Brown Suit, will come to save the Afrikaner 'nation' from the scourge of the black man in South Africa. Eventually an Afrikaans man is arrested, wearing the symbolic brown suit. He believes that he is the saviour of the Afrikaans people. Hannelie is horrified that her friend is associated with this group of fanatics. His response represents the blurring of the otherwise impermeable line between apartheid and post-apartheid in this episode. Jan, the character who helped Hannelie gain access to her childhood home in the opening scenes of the episode, also helps her to decipher the fanatical prophecy that the man in the brown suit believes he is carrying out – and solve the investigation. Jan is the person who sees that something has changed in her. However, he is a racist and it is in this guise that Hannelie finds her fondness for and closeness with Jan confusing. Her relationship with him is symbolic of all that she must relinquish when she abandons her childhood home and returns to the city. Eventually the choice is easily made, as Jan displays his racism: 'Han, this is how it's meant to be – these guys [black farm-labourers] are workers, we are farmers' (*Zero Tolerance*: 2002). Although he does not treat his labourers with racist disrespect and perpetrate the same kind of physical or rhetorical violence on them for which apartheid is notorious, he still believes in a hierarchy that positions his family above the interests, needs and rights of the black farm-workers. This provides the crisis for Hannelie and she is forced to choose her new life in Johannesburg *over* her family-life on the farm. However, the episode portrays that choice as more difficult than the clear cut binary of before and after apartheid will allow.

Rolanda

I don't like ... I like being safe but I don't like being too safe. I like challenging people and I like being challenged by people... (Rolanda Marais: Conversation: October 2005)

Rolanda seems to be determined to make a different kind of structural choice from Hannelie, her fictional persona. Although there are mutabilities for Hannelie, in the form of Jan and the help she gained from him with her investigation, there is also a final choice that must be made – she is forced to choose intimacy in one space or the other: her history or her future, not much of a choice considering that she cannot have real intimacy with the people at home as she is forced to hide her identity from them. Rolanda however refuses to abandon what she perceives as the safety of her past and so she tries to change her home and its rhetoric of Christian conservatism; she constructs it as something that is mutable itself. She is aware of the structures that render her Afrikaans culture unacceptable to her – the history of racism and oppression – but she wishes to re-structure them so that her community will be rhetorically part of the new nation in the manner that Hannelie’s family could not:

My father’s a minister in the *NG Kerk* ... and I’ve always had gay friends and they just stimulate me more. And now my dad had to, you know there’s this whole gay issue in the *NG Kerk* and he had to do a *preek*¹³ about it and he went and spoke to one of my gay friends about it. So he’s very open about it, I think because he’s been exposed to it through me, while his colleagues haven’t. You know they watch *Zero Tolerance*, but for them, because it’s a kind of English series and it’s something that’s out of their comfort zone, out of their familiarity. When I did a bit of *7de Laan*¹⁴ and they thought ‘wow, I’m so successful and I’m so famous and everything is great. But they never quite understood *Zero Tolerance*. She (Rolanda’s mother) would tape it for me to watch, but then she would tape *7de Laan* over it ... so while it might not be relevant I think it’s necessary for them to watch and learn from (Rolanda Marais: Conversation: 2005).

The binary as constructed by the portrayal of Hannelie is hermetically sealed; even the character of Jan, who attempts to permeate its boundaries, is unable to do so, given that his racism prevents Hannelie from sharing the knowledge of her sexuality with him. This sexuality becomes fixed as symbolic of the changed discourse of the nation. The oppositions, as seen by Rolanda, in reality, are definitely permeable – and indeed her experience of playing Hannelie is an illustration of this. Although she felt exhilarated and excited about playing this role, she had to travel to an unsafe space in order to do so. Physically, she travelled to Johannesburg:

¹³ Sermon.

¹⁴ An Afrikaans soap opera less concerned with the politics of post-apartheid South Africa than *Zero Tolerance* and inhabited by characters of various races but who share the same relatively Christian conservative politics.

And then I came here on set, the first day *HUH* almost the only white person, the entire crew was black and it was wonderful because it really opened my mind. I felt very self-conscious of my white skin the first day or two but after that I just forgot, which was very nice, quite an eye opener in a way because Cape Town is very closed. Johannesburg is so much more cosmopolitan but at the same time very African (Rolanda Marais: Conversation: 2005).

In this way, to some extent, Rolanda herself, unwittingly perhaps, makes a critique of the crude choices and binaries present as the only options in the programme. That physical space, that is so much 'more African' than Cape Town, is also so much less safe: she had to work in a crew of predominantly black faces and she had to play a homosexual role:

They (gay actresses) will never take on a gay role because they know it's a little bit of a taboo still ... 'I'm so glad I could represent that like what is kind of seen as an underdog by some people, by the family and the office and also a lot of viewers watching it and I like that because it forces people to re-think their values and what they've been brought up with. And what I also like is the fact, the way I look I'm very feminine and Hannelie's also quite feminine. She's not the typical, like butch-dyke like ... and I like that I thought that was a very brave choice for them to make her completely Afrikaans, white and ... ja. And not really making an issue about the fact that she's gay' (Rolanda Marais: Conversation: 2005).

All of these mobilities represent permeation of the boundary between apartheid and post-apartheid for Rolanda and indeed, as she constructs it, for her community in Wellington as well. She is proud to bring her experiences of the new, unsafe nation back into the safe space and use them to chisel away at the conservative, Calvinistic paradigm of Afrikaner culture constructed through Christian nationalism in Wellington.

Afrikaans Culture: Apartheid and Its Post

This chapter has looked at the construction of women's subjectivities in the post-apartheid context. It has been shown how those that were previously disadvantaged are put to work in this new discourse as signifiers of change and upliftment. Where, then, does that leave those that were advantaged by apartheid? We saw in the previous chapter that Sara and Hilary, representative of a particular middle-class, English-speaking, white subjectivity, harness blackness as a signifier of their continued relevance and stylishness in the discourse that privileges blackness as a signifier. What, then, are the strategies available to Afrikaans subjectivities to inscribe them into the trajectory of the future of the country? The new discourse struggles with this question as it seeks to foreground the experiences of black and other oppressed groups as necessary for the bright future that is the end-point of the utopian trajectory of post-apartheid society. It seems that in extreme

terms there have been two dominant responses to the transition within Afrikaans cultural groups: one that seeks to incorporate the changes into a continuation of their culture and one that resists and sinks more deeply into its conservatism and isolates itself from the rest of the country. That is, Afrikaners who are no longer fighting for a *Volkstaat*¹⁵ in Orania in the Northern Cape are now trying to permeate the boundary between the apartheid past of strict cultural conservatism and the new, diametrically opposed, future-bound rhetoric of post-apartheid.

Afrikaans nationalism was previously invested in laws such as those that prohibited sex or marriage between people of the same sex and between people of different races (Vestergaard: 2005: 21-23). It has been compellingly argued and widely accepted that the stricture of the laws on sex and sexuality were deeply tied into the ideological construction of the nation (Van Zyl: 2005: 23). The segregation laws were implemented to prevent corruption of the pure Afrikaans nation as argued by Retief in “Keeping Sodom Out of the Laager: State Repression of Homosexuality in Apartheid South Africa” (1994: 99). Homosexuality posed a different, yet profoundly related, kind of threat to apartheid and more specifically to the so-called Afrikaner nation: heterosexuality was central to the discourse of the Afrikaner nation; anything else would have threatened the continuation of this minority group in South Africa (Van Zyl: 2005: 24). The discourse of Afrikaner nationalism, then, had to maintain a strict hegemony not only over the oppressed population, but over the Afrikaner population as well. This was, as Posel argues in “Whiteness and Power in the South African Civil Service: Paradoxes of the South African State”, maintained by using the ‘state and church apparatus’ (1999: 117) to impose heavy sanctions on individuals who attempted to construct identities that challenged highly conservative Afrikaans subjectivity.

In the post-apartheid era, freed to some extent from the hegemony of Afrikaner Christian nationalism that strictly policed not only sexuality but all aspects of identity, many Afrikaners are trying to re-construct Afrikaans culture. It is being re-visioned as part of the new discourse. Stephanie Marlin-Curiel made a case study of a rave party held by a young Afrikaans music-maker as an insight into strategies employed by Afrikaners in the post-apartheid context to re-construct Afrikaner culture. Again, as with the stylisation of the black youth in the *Y Generation* (Nuttall: 2004B: 431), images of the past circulate and acquire new meanings. As Vestergaard discusses, ‘traditional Afrikaans values are being challenged by young Afrikaners’ (2001: 35). In her article

¹⁵ Folkstate – a separate state autonomous from South Africa and reserved for the occupation of white Afrikaners only.

Marlin-Curiel describes the displaying of images of male political figures of apartheid at a party accompanied by electronic music as a manner of re-mixing their meanings and inscribing them in a narrative of modernisation and change of the language and its culture in the post-apartheid context. All of this signifies an attempt to maintain Afrikaans, but to shift the inherited meaning, for which the current generation of young cultural producers is refusing to be held responsible. In an address to parliament quoted in Vestergaard (2001: 29), Marthinus Van Schalkwyk famously, in an obvious attempt to retain some level of relevance and increase his support base commented: 'We in the New NP say there are no colour or political requirements to be an Afrikaner. It is an inclusive concept based on only one criterion: *language*'. This comment reflects the need for the re-construction of the Afrikaner subjectivity that Rolanda is trying to achieve by forcing her father and his community to become tolerant of homosexuality, despite its profound conflict with the very foundation of the nationalism that overtook Afrikaner culture in 1948 when the National Party came into power. This is a complex task, which *Zero Tolerance* is unwilling or unable to portray the character of Hannelie as attempting.

Perhaps the most prominent and lyrically engaging attempt by an Afrikaans person to come to terms with the contemporary inflections of deep racism and violence in the language and its culture is the fictionalised account by Antjie Krog of her work as a radio reporter on the TRC. Any discussion of Afrikaans subjectivity would be incomplete without reference to this brutally honest and personal work, which seriously interrogates the heritage of Afrikanerdom that was made public during the commission:

Was apartheid the product of some horrific shortcoming in Afrikaner culture? Could one find the key in Afrikaner songs and literature, in beer and *braaivleis*? How do I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders given to kill, belonged to the language of my heart? (1998: 238)

This question is highly suggestive of the kind of struggle that an individual has with the desire to maintain the Afrikaans subjectivity, while dissociating the self with the violent and controversial history associated with the language. Another important example of re-construction of Afrikaans culture may be found in the well-known *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees*¹⁶ (KKNK), established in 1994 consequent to a vision by Nic Barrow and André Marais. Vestergaard comments that: 'highlighting unorthodox ways of using the language, challenges the notion of *suiwer*¹⁷ Afrikaans,

¹⁶ Klein Karoo (A Southern area of the Karoo Desert in the Western Cape – a traditionally Afrikaans farming area) National Arts Festival.

¹⁷ pure

which was so important to the Christian nationalism' (Vestergaard: 2001: 27). The subsequent and sustained success of this festival suggests that attempts to distance contemporary Afrikaans cultural production from the violent history of Afrikaans language and culture, without losing the rich and productive nature of Afrikaans in post-apartheid South Africa may be successful.

Rolanda's project of trying not only to create her own re-construction of Afrikaans culture, but also of that of the small community of Wellington in the Western Cape, then, fits into a broader project of cultural re-construction of Afrikaans culture in the post-apartheid context. In the new nationalist discourse of that context, Afrikanerdom is tied into the apartheid pole of the binary, while blackness is inscribed into the post-space. Afrikaners trying to live inside the boundaries of the new discourse must find ways of navigating the determination of their history, culture and language as profoundly racist and violent. Some choose to isolate themselves from the discourse, to reject its trajectory and to remain separate; some, like Rolanda in real life, distance themselves from the history of apartheid, but attempt to remain connected to the cultural history of Afrikaans, distanced from its history of violent racism. *Zero Tolerance*, however, creates a gulf: a binary, between the past and the present through the portrayal of Hannelie, one that sadly seems impossible to breach. Hannelie is left unable to even explore the nuances of her homosexual identity and what this means to her as she is constructed as simply one thing or another – she is either an apartheid-style Afrikaner, or she is a post-apartheid style homosexual. This binary, then, even in its attempt to obliterate the closure of apartheid, perpetrates a closure on homosexual identity itself (and indeed on other subjectivities that embody the newness of post-apartheid). By forcing a homosexual to be a signifier of the positive trajectory of the new nation, the discourse closes down the possibility of other kinds of experiences of sexuality that are simply not explored at all. It is for this reason that a character that was initially interesting and engaging to me as a homosexual woman in post-apartheid South Africa let me down. It lacked the complexity of the subjective experience of navigating homosexuality that I had experienced, and expected when I saw a character that challenged the tropes of a stereotype of homosexuality.

CONCLUSION: IT IS A SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

The discourse of the post-apartheid South African nation has the power to change lives in substantial material ways. It has set itself on a utopian trajectory of peace, democracy and equal access to resources for all. This trajectory is discursively constructed through the use of symbols and signs on various levels in society. On a banal level it is consumed in the media, shared in conversation and taught in school. On a more formal level it is constructed through the legal science of the Constitution. On a scholarly level it is apprehended and interrogated in studies such as this one. This discourse is constructed of building blocks forged out of the history of apartheid and re-cast with new meaning in the present of post-apartheid. That is, the discourse is built on a binary opposition with the history of apartheid that it seeks to obliterate. To remember that severe deprivation and oppression were suffered during apartheid is trite, and that these must be addressed in post-apartheid South Africa, is obvious. The discourse of the post-apartheid nation seeks, through the unification of all the heterogeneity that makes up South Africa, to create a single mission of healing, improvement, reconstruction and development. These are uncontroversial goals. But discourse, and the power invested in the knowledge it imparts, works in complex and sometimes hidden ways. This is an element of discursive formation in general and not only of the post-apartheid South African nationalist discourse. It is my hope that this thesis contributes to the interrogation and challenge to the discourse.

It has been shown that the South African discourse serves a neo-capitalist trajectory of inclusion of new markets in the economy. The discursive construction of a unified nation also serves the interests of an expanding Christian network in South Africa. The ANC government, too, is kept in power, at least partly, through the discourse that constructs it as improving the lives of all South Africans. That everybody's interests are served must be a good thing, were it not at the expense of certain voiceless or powerless people whose interests are silenced or erased. It has been shown that women's bodies and stories are harnessed by the discourse as signifiers of change and growth, even though they may not be experiencing this improvement in the hard realities of their daily lives. Domestic workers are re-stereotyped as figures of change and growth, while experiencing, in many cases, the same levels of deprivation as before. The representation of Francina in *Zero Tolerance* challenges tropes of representation of this stereotype. Although this may seem to ameliorate the discursive closure that traditionally constricts this subjectivity it also serves to silence elements of the poor conditions of domestic workers that persist in the present. The erasure of the structural exploitation of domestic workers in service of the positive discourse of the post-apartheid discursive

formation is a perpetuation of oppression and runs directly against the grain of the discourse of the new South Africa. Hannelie represents Afrikanerdom in transition. She is born of the history of apartheid Afrikaners and has become a representation of the new South Africa – she is a young, happy, homosexual woman. In the episode in which she attempts to navigate the binary that she represents of apartheid *and* its post, she is forced to choose one or the other. The actress that plays her attempts to create a different structural choice for herself – she attempts to keep elements of the history of Afrikanerdom and reject others.

The various contingencies and strategies of identification that are employed by various subjectivities in South Africa illustrate the ubiquity of the discourse and also the ability of individuals to re-construct their identities in new contexts according to the dominant social mode of identification. In post-apartheid South Africa, there is pressure among whites to be a new South African, to have an element of one's identity that integrates into the black majority of the nation. Therefore, some individuals attempt to harness themselves as signifiers of this new nation. When Sara Blecher constructed a representation of herself in the form of Denzela Ledwaba, she too harnessed a signifier of the post-apartheid discourse so as to render her subjectivity more relevant and meaningful in this context. If the makers of the show wanted to create a representation that reflected the moral core of the nation, it was absolutely necessary to create a *black* woman and not a *white* one, who simply could not reflect the core of the post-apartheid discourse. Hilary, in her attempt to represent herself as relevant to the post-apartheid discourse, appropriated more than just blackness to fabricate her identity as central. She appropriated history and re-configured herself as central and influential in her field of production. She also harnessed signifiers of style in the post-apartheid Johannesburg context as a way of crafting herself as fashionable and avant garde. The relationship, then, between discourse and individual identity is a fascinating one where unconscious and conscious processes of identification are constantly performed and re-visioned as the requirements of the discourse shift.

My personal interest in *Zero Tolerance* reflects elements of my own subjectivity, which have, during the process of reading and exploring the show, become more conscious for me. That I felt the deep sense of identification with the show that resulted in the desire to read and write about it, is suggestive of a shared subjectivity with Sara, reflected in the character of Denzela, and also in the character of Hannelie. I saw them, particularly at first, as playing a liberating role in post-apartheid South African discourse. However, I realized that they embodied somewhat more ambiguous meanings. This research has revealed that opening up of newness may also entail a certain closing

down and it is the nuance required to understand this discursive see-saw that has been the most valuable outcome of this thesis for me.

I feel at once both taken in by the discourse of post-apartheid South Africa and angry about its brash manipulation of subjectivities that have suffered a history of deprivation, as signifiers of change, not always subjects of change. As much as I felt *Zero Tolerance* had a role to play in changing the experience of homosexual women in South Africa, I see it also has a role to play in silencing the experiences of structural exploitation suffered by domestic workers. What has become apparent is that the show's role is neither to perpetuate the inequity of apartheid nor to ameliorate it. It simply reflects the discourse of post-apartheid South Africa and in this way gives insight into identity-construction and discursive formation in that space.

Finally, I have learnt to read the discourse with more critical eyes. We all need to be encouraged to be more honest with ourselves. We should not simply buy into the rainbow discourse to hide from the past and to bury the guilt or anything else we may be trying to escape, which does not seem to have space in South Africa at this time. We must make space for the darkness and the suffering in our expressions of hope for this nation. I acknowledge the darkness in my heritage as a white person in South Africa. I have experienced extraordinary privilege at the cost of other young people who have suffered deprivation. I also acknowledge all the light in my heritage that privilege enables and wish to use this light for the good of our nation. I feel a part of this imaginary of a possible better life for all. I feel privileged and proud to be working in South Africa at this time and to have the resources to do so - of an extensive education and a passion for this beautiful country. These have allowed me to make the critiques that have emerged in my analysis of one intriguing, compelling and flawed popular television series, so aptly and hopefully called: *Zero Tolerance*.

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APPENDIX ONE

Conversation with Sara Blecher and Emma Holtmann

August 2005: Emmarentia, Johannesburg.

Notes:

I had been in contact with Sara for about a month and a half before we met. I had first spoken to her on the telephone, having put off calling her for months – for fear of being judged or dismissed or ridiculed. When we finally spoke she was enthusiastic and interested in my research. She asked me to send her a copy of my paper on the show from the previous year. I did. We met at her big house in a fairly smart (not one of the most ostentatiously wealthy – but certainly an exclusive and predominantly white) neighbourhood of Johannesburg one afternoon, her children were there and so was her assistant/partner: Dimi. Dimi is a young, black woman who had been working at *Special Assignment* with Sara. She tried to speak bits and pieces of Tswana to Dimi, the odd word or two, but obviously didn't really know the language at all. They were proudly familiar with one another. I offered to give Dimi a lift to her appointment in trendy Melville after the interview, I was heading in that direction. She told me, on the way, all about her career at the SABC and how Sara appreciated her far more than they did.

EPH: One of the things I am interested in is: what is the relationship between watching a television show and real life?

SB: Well I think it's long-term, you know. It takes a long time for attitudes to change... Camille Cosby (Bill Cosby's wife) ... started the Cosby show when there had never been a normal black family on American television before that sat down and ate supper at the table. And if you look at how that's changed society and the representation of black people on TV and just peoples' families in general. I do think it's long-term.

EPH: Where did the idea come from and when you had it did you want to have an effect on people's lives?

SB: My background is film school in New York and then journalism. I was doing research and report writing, for violence-monitoring organisations. I was doing research on the private security industry. My mom came to visit and she said 'we have to do a drama series on this stuff'... When we wrote the first ideas for the series, there were no Scorpions! We basically made up the Scorpions and then the Scorpions came into being and then after that we basically adapted to fit with the Scorpions, so we spent quite a lot of time with them, quite a lot of research, how do they work, how do they take on cases.

EPH: Where did Denzela come from?

SB: I think Denzela was actually, to be honest, largely based on me. I mean a lot of her backstory was my backstory. When we conceived her we conceived her being like Denzel Washington, which is where the name came from. We were watching Homicide and Prime Suspect and what we took from Prime Suspect was that crossover between, you know, like the personal stuff of a woman having to deal with this world and the crime solving.

EPH: So it is specifically about a woman's experience.

SB: Completely, that was the idea for the first series. It didn't really carry over into the second series. I think what I happened in the feedback we got from the first series, to be honest, was that people found Denzela to be too strident, like too self-righteous and it was irritating to many people... unattractive, you didn't like her and the show didn't work if you didn't like her. I think that was a combination of the way we conceived the character and the actress. In the next series ... the other actors and actresses were so interesting ... like Hannelie ... was such an amazing actress that basically we just wrote for her. A lot of that happened with Ben Kruger, he's such a wonderful actor. As you get better and better actors you start being interested in who is this character and what are their stories? So it became much more ensemble in the second series.

EPH: Was that quite intentional, focussing on women – from Prime Suspect?

SB: That was all we knew. I grew up in a family of women and my mom as well. It's like, we just come from that – it's normal. The Hannelie character was actually largely based on two people, one: a friend of mine: she's a gay woman who's high up in intelligence and a cousin of hers who is a techy. What a nice thing to have a young, white, Afrikaans woman with no racial hang-ups. She was quite amazing, you know, Kim Engelbrecht had issues about all the gay scenes. The SABC scratched out all the places where they kiss in the scripts, apparently you can have gay men kissing, but you can't have gay women kissing – the SABC's hectic, if you're primetime, on SABC 2, you can't have a woman on top of a man in a love scene ... we had to take out half the sounds of the breathing.

EPH: How aware were you of the genre ... how restricted were you by the conventions of the genre?

SB: Quite a lot of help from David Simons and David Mills. They went through the genre in quite a lot of detail.

EPH: What about the way that those female characters do challenge the genre?

SB: It just completely happened because they were the characters that emerged. To me the most interesting thing that they said was - move towards reality - David Simons spent three years

living with the cops in Baltimore. What Homicide changed was suddenly there was reality intervening and what was really going on. I think that's what we really tried to do ... a total realism ... most of the writers on the first series were journalists and every single episode in that series was based on a true story, so we took a true story and wrote the episode around it.

EPH: Did you get input from the Scorpions?

SB: We had interaction with them. We had such an interesting relationship with the cops, Zero Tolerance is critical of the police ... they were incredibly supportive ...

EPH: Funding?

SB: It was basically a labour of love from everyone who worked on it. The SABC want black people to be idealised

EPH: Like Generations?

SB: Yes, like Generations: aspirational TV.

EPH: Why did you choose SABC 2?

SB: SABC 2 is the natural home, predominantly Afrikaans and Tswana.

EPH: Why do people labour at this show? What do they love?

SB: Making really good South African TV, particularly after the first season people in the industry wanted to work on it.

SB: We did conceive of Denzela to be the moral core of the series and in a funny way like of the whole country. Each episode there's a big moral dilemma that she's gotta make a moral choice one way or the other and she always makes the right choice.

EPH: What about 'muti murder central'?

SB: I didn't agree with that part of your paper... The Siso thing was a dilemma of the whole show. I think we overplayed that beat, with Siso. The problem is that when you are a working mother, that is always the tension – there aren't enough hours in the day. It was very real for me, and maybe too real, so maybe we overplayed it. I didn't feel like that was a judgment ... the love scene between her and Vuyo was not her doing a wrong thing, it was her asserting her independence... Worth talking to Ben, about the character of Sakkie – and the way that his barber in Pretoria relates to Sakkie.

EPH: How intentional was it to confront the South African contemporary politics and why did it happen that way? What effect did you imagine the show might have?

SB: I think it just happens that way for us, it's just what we're interested in and what caught the attention of our writers. What we consciously tried to do was not to do a show about black kids in Soweto or white people in the suburbs. I think we really tried to do a show that actually 'melting potted'; they clash rather than melt, that took a cross-section of people. We

intended not to whitewash anything. Because that's not interesting, because it's not real. No relationships are black and white.

EPH: South Africa is a culturally interesting and challenging place, with constant clashes and conflicts, people having to find compromises and ways of existing next to one another. Do you see the show as part of that process?

SB: I'll be really happy if the show is part of that process! Then it will be first prize – if it changes people then great. If it changes them without them knowing and they think they're just being entertained then that's better.

EPH: What about international audiences?

SB: We screen the film at international film festivals and there was a really interesting response to the gay relationship at the Durban Film Festival.

EPH: Very specific relationship with reality – keep it real.

SB: Yes. We're more likely to bend it on protocols than we are on character's experiences.

EPH: So you base that on interactions with real Scorpions and policewomen.

SB: Yes, but not just the experience of Scorpions or policewomen – the experience of people, women in general. What we've done in the next series is instead of focussing just on South Africa there's a shift in focus to Southern Africa.

APPENDIX TWO

Conversation with Hilary Blecher and Emma Holtmann

November 2005: Newtown, Johannesburg

Notes:

I met with Hilary after much to-ing and fro-ing between us about times and place to meet. She told me to phone her on the morning of our meeting to find out the time, then I was told to phone her just before the time to set the place. Eventually we met at the offices of the production company with whom Sara and Hilary were working to produce the show: Ochre. The offices were in Newtown, in the trendiest possible location. Upstairs from the songwriter's club, a cool new club I had been shown on my previous trip to Johannesburg. The offices were functional but smart. I came into the office and Hilary was on the phone trying to get hold of the producer of the Fugees, to get permission for usage of their version of 'No Woman, No Cry' for one of the episodes. Cool. We moved out of the office into an empty space around the corner from the lift, a young black guy called Andrew carried our chairs out and brought us chilled water. He was eager to please. She was wearing Chanel sunglasses, or imitation Chanel and more makeup than her daughter had at our meeting a few months before.

HB: (On the subject of the responses by the cops so far): We represent the Scorpions and we are actually negative about them. Uh, there are good cops and bad cops and the aim of television is to tell stories that reflect the society and not every cop in our society is good you know if they want something like that they want some sort of fantasy. They did, they actually did, there was a conference and they actually wanted advertising, through shows like ours. It's another form of censorship... Another interesting thing to think about is, you know, we had focus groups and across the board, every age, every colour, every sex thought CSI was just fabulous. Well CSI is bullshit... it's nonsense, people don't care about that, they think they're getting an insight into something and basically we're pretty honest with what our stories are.

EH: All the women I have interviewed so far have said the same thing, they all watch CSI religiously.

HB: In America and here, really across the board, if you say to people what is your favourite show they will say it is CSI.

EH: I expected that the women would be enthusiastic about Zero Tolerance, especially the women.

- HB: Well the police have refused to cooperate with us, I mean they wouldn't. No they have, from the first series, when the one episode was on farm murders and was crooked cops and that; and from then on they didn't want to have anything to do with us.
- EH: One of the women I interviewed said that she was unhappy with the representation of a policeman drinking on duty, she said there should be repercussions and that 'you would never see that on CSI, you would never see a cop drinking'. I loved that.
- HB: Well the thing is that we're not cops, we're investigators. But they were very negative. But now the metro police will cooperate with us but the South African police won't.
- EH: Sara said that she spoke with the regional head of the DSO in Gauteng when she dealt with the Scorpions, and when I got hold of him he said no one in his unit watches Zero Tolerance, I found this really surprising.
- HB: Because it's very hard television.
- EH: I interviewed Rolanda Marais, the actress who plays Hannelie, this morning. So I am interested in the play of identity in the show – in two ways. Firstly, how the women who watch the show interact with the characters and secondly how your identities (yours and Sara's) play a role in the construction of the characters.
- HB: That's the first season, really.
- EH: With Denzela?
- HB: Ja, with Denzela it was definitely what we knew about our lives.
- EH: I asked Sara this question, about how the show came about and she told me the story of the security guard story she was researching in Durban, for a documentary, and how this turned into an idea for a TV show, but I want to know a bit more detail about this. Firstly where did the name 'Zero Tolerance' come from?
- HB: Well, I was living in New York at that stage. And one of the great policies in New York was the Zero Tolerance policy. It seemed to me like what we were thinking about was a crime series, there was so much crime in the country at that stage and there hadn't been a crime series yet in South Africa. Nobody had done a crime series. And it seemed that a crime series was an important thing to do, but it wasn't a crime series, I kept saying it was an anti-crime series. We had an anti-crime-fighting unit. So basically it was a unit that was formed to deal with crime because at that stage there was huge frustration as to what people were doing about crime and the whole idea for the series actually happened ... well, I'll tell you how I thought it happened ... We conceived of it before the Scorpions, but there was really a need. There was obviously a need and that's why we felt there was a need and everybody else felt there was a need for a crime-fighting unit. What had happened was I had been

working on a soap in New York. And it was also interesting for me that a lot of the English series combined investigation with a strong focus on personal lives. Like the main characters were personalities, like Prime Suspect – Prime Suspect was the key for me. I was on holiday in Durban and Sara said to me ‘read this’ (Sara always says ‘read this, read this’) and I read this, and I thought it would be very interesting to take something that was very much a documentary, which isn’t really my field and to take documentary material about what’s happening in the country and what the main dynamics are, of the country were at that particular stage and then combine that as a landscape with how people were reacting to it and what people were doing. So that was the first series. It only happened, like seven years later, and sort of by accident – and then I came back and worked on Isidingo for a long time and then it was really like it wasn’t going to happen and then sort of actually like five years later the SABC said we’d really like to do it. And I think that there was a fear in this country of people tackling real issues. It was fine if it was documentary because only a few people watched that and soaps, if you think of what the soap was even before I got to Isidingo – that’s another interesting thing to think about – is that soaps were Generations, which was pure fantasy and what happens is when I came to Isidingo all the women were Barbie Dolls or Doormats – that’s how I described it – and when I left Isidingo everybody said to me ‘the problem with Isidingo is all the men are wimps and all the women are so powerful’ and that really happened while I was there. I didn’t realise to what extent that had happened, like Ma Agnes, all the characters became very strong whereas before it was Grey Hofmeyr, you know, a real macho men’s thing, you know women don’t really fit. And this was, coming from America, this was horrific, you know, because in America women are very strong. That was always important to me, you know, and it was always important from the very beginning that we looked from the woman’s experience and it had to be a black woman in this country. And that was still a first at that stage as well.

EH: You’ve got all the racial types in the show – was that trying to be representative or trying to appeal to a broader audience or what?

HB: No neither. It was neither, I think that what we were trying to do was, and it all had to do with the dynamics of the moment, where the new was taking over from the old so we needed the old and that’s why we had Sakkie and we needed the new which was Denzela, the new black-empowered woman. Um, the thing about Hannelie, I don’t know how we got Hannelie as being gay because also at that stage, even when I was coming off Isidingo, only men were gay, it was only acceptable that men were gay, it wasn’t really acceptable that women were gay. And I know like Sara was from Natal, Kwazulu, the men are very anti that relationship,

they find it very odd. So I think that Hannelie, I don't know where Hannelie came out from the fact that she was, uh, gay. But basically I think that one of the things that one has to do is create a drama, number one that's representative. So I think it was more of a sense of representing different minorities and majorities and see how they were dealing. I think what's interesting for me about Hannelie, when I think – this is probably it – is that she was a new Afrikaner. And I had known, even from my days at University, a lot of girls that came from very traditional backgrounds and they broke every taboo, one after the other. And I think it was more that sense of the character, as breaking the taboos of the past and that being gay was just incidental to that; it wasn't the big thing of having a gay character it was more somebody who was in revolt against apartheid.

EH: I felt that coming through in 'The Man with the Brown Suit' – all the levels of conflict she experienced when she went home to see her folks, lots of stuff about being Afrikaans and how to make sense of that.

HB: Yes. And in a way that's how we lived in this country as being white you know. You only spoke certain conversations with certain people and you actually only lived half your life here and a bit of your life here and a bit of your life there. We really didn't have an integrated life.

EH: Coming back to the 'cop show genre' – why did you choose it?

HB: The story was really an anti-crime fighting unit, we never thought of it as a cop show.

EH: Is that genre then particularly meaningful for you?

HB: Well I think it had to do with coming back to this country – all everybody ever spoke about was crime – and it was a sense of 'what are people doing about it?' – talking about what people were doing and what this – I sort of, in a way I suppose I thought this would be a very positive thing, uh, which I can remember someone saying to me in an early interview 'people are so sick of crime they've got all this crime in their lives already why do they want to come and watch it on television?' and I said: 'it's not really a crime show it's an anti-crime show.'

EH: Why South Africa?

HB: I think it was a certain moment in my life when I could come back and I think it was the opportunity of being able to act on a vision. You know, like I mean you could never have done this in America. Like the fact that you could come here – like I also thought you could never do it here and then I got so involved with Isidingo. But I think it was the sense that it could happen, that you could actually tell your own stories in a way that you never could in America. I mean we would have been censored to hell and even now I mean when I think

what we put on, and you should see the new third series, you know the fact that we've been ... I just wonder, are people hearing what we're saying?

EH: I wonder whose watching!

HB: You know it's very strange who's watching. There are the odd people who really love it. I think people found the whole style very difficult in the beginning. I think people found, um, it's very sophisticated. And if you look at the third series, the third series is even more sophisticated. It looks like an overseas show. What I wanted to do, and not all the directors have done it, after you sit in focus groups and you hear CSI, CSI so what do people really want, and this was a conscious decision, people want technology. So on our budget we can't really afford technology but we went to Teljoy and they gave us quite a lot of technology. I wanted to get rid of all the paper ... so we're doing 3rd generation technology... so in that way I was definitely influenced by people's wanting to see CSI.

EH: Who organises these focus groups?

HB: Well, the SABC does them, we nag and nag and nag and they finally did it after we had written the third series, so we had to go back and put more technology in.

EH: But back to the question of who the audience is. I have also noticed that some people will love it and others not – there doesn't seem to be a pattern.

HB: Well you know it's hard viewing. Also, you know, we had really bad publicity. People didn't know about it, so people just had to find it by accident. And it was a difficult show to find by accident because if you didn't know what had happened before it was difficult to pick up. So one of the other things we've done in the third series is we've done stand alone episodes – so any body can start watching at any episode and it makes total sense rather like Law and Order. Except for four episodes which are really two films.

EH: I suppose SABC 2 also makes it a bit hidden.

HB: They've got a shit ... I mean SABC is, sorry, a shit organisation, with shit budgets and nobody with vision and nobody understanding what people need and so you're compromising all the time horribly and they don't have good publicity, what can I say. I'm a very outspoken person so whoever wants to challenge me can. ... we have become more tswana and less English ...

EH: So who does watch the show?!

HB: I think it's people who ... I think it's quite an intelligent audience ... sitting in on these focus groups is interesting you know, people who you thought would never like it ... you know ... so I think it, I think the difficulty was you had to know the story and I think we've dealt with that now. And people didn't quite know how to respond to the show and if we had

more publicity, more criticism – which is really saying to people ‘this is what’s good about the show, this is how you can look at it, this is what you can appreciate’ we really would have done wonderfully.

EH: People must be watching?

HB: I think some people now have got into it.

EH: So there’s two things that come out of all of that – firstly, there’s obviously a lot of you and your own experience in the show, it’s very much about your own identity.

HB: I think ... well you know what, you always use yourself ... I mean if you create something it’s like, and so do the actors. But it’s also, um, I think what, I mean the first series was basically about Denzela and the second series was basically about the Unit. The first series was about morality, it was about where is morality in such a society and how do you make the moral choice, not all the characters made the moral choice and everybody somehow was tainted. And that sort of goes through. And that’s something I get a bit nervous about when I actually see it, that there’s no pure morality. So even Hilton, who is Terence Bridget and in this series is the head of the Unit, does a really terrible thing that he’s gotta live with. I don’t know why that happens, I hate to think why that happens in the series. But there were things that were interesting to me, some people came with , some of the writers came with their own ideas, but there were certain things I wanted to look at and the main thing, I think I contributed to the series in terms of vision is, I thought we should expand out of South Africa and do the whole of Southern Africa, and we did, especially in the episodes I’m involved in but not as much as I would have liked to ... I think one reacts to what is around one, and I think the country now, definitely under Mbeki, good or bad, is taking cognisance of Southern Africa, not just South Africa.

EH: And so you feel that the show should be a positive contribution to South Africa – with a strong, powerful black Denzela and a beautiful, strong, gay, Afrikaans Hannelie?

HB: I don’t know that that was really conscious, I think it was more a sense of dealing with the issues of being a woman, a working woman, ok, and the issue of morality. You know I think you really have to look at each series at the moment at which it was born, sociologically and in terms of what was happening in the society. So I think each series was influenced by the dynamics of the society at that moment. You know the thing with the rape of those two women, it became very interesting to me because a lot of rape stories were being done and women’s abuse but what would happen to a gay couple if one of them were raped. And that sense, to show that it’s just people, you know there’s so much sense in this country, I mean

not as much now but certainly there was then, that people don't feel exactly the same but everybody feels the same.

EH: So there is a question about the social role that you play. You know one of the women I interviewed complained about the drinking on duty and she was suggesting that there was a social responsibility.

HB: No, that would never be interesting for me. I mean the interesting thing for me is, you know, what the conflicts are and what the dilemmas are and even the dilemmas in leading a truly moral life, or, however strong Denzela is, there were moments of weakness and it's that sense of layering that's important to me. You know I think what we really wanted to do is, this is what I really felt about the first series, is that if anybody looked at the first series they'd understand what was happening in South Africa at that moment in time. So we took areas of particular tension and anxiety for people. Child Abuse etc.

EH: But still made for a local audience?

HB: It's saying to people these are the issues that are happening and look at them. It was in a way I s'pose painting a moment in time; you can only make television for your audience.

EH: So you're going to keep doing that? Fourth season planned?

HB: No, no. I think I'm going back to America, I'm very tired.

...

HB: I'm really fearless when it comes to TV. I really think there's nothing that anybody can do to me, if anybody does anything to me I'll just move on.

EH: And what is that fearlessness about?

HB: It's just how I've lived my life ... in the sense that ... I find myself ... I've always said to people when you're acting you've gotta just close your nose like this and just jump off the Brooklyn bridge and if you're not willing to take those risks creatively you're not actually gonna get anywhere. But I think that's how I've lived my life creatively ... you know the other thing that's very interesting that might be interesting for you is when I came to the Market Theatre there were no traditions in South Africa theatre ... but one didn't really know what South African Theatre was or what we were gonna do so we had to invent it and I think that just taught me that you have to and you could invent – there were actually no rules.

EH: So was that why you moved to TV here?

HB: No, the move to TV for me was in New York – for the money. But I think that here there were no traditions so we learnt to invent them. So I just always thought you could invent, probably without thinking why.

EH: That is how I thought of the show when I first saw it, as a pioneer.

HB: I think lots of people who did appreciate it saw that. And if you think about it, it was actually conceived like probably seven years earlier before you saw it, so you can imagine, what it was when we first came up with the idea. I think I've always worked like that, I mean, I did Sam Sheppard, the first Sam Sheppard at the Market and at the time the reviews would say 'what's happened to the market theatre, are they committing suicide?', you know, and then when you come back everyone would say 'oh my god you did those Sam Sheppards ... so you've just gotta have a thick skin. You know what, would you be interested in writing an article and we could give it to the publicity department at the SABC? Because you seem to get the show and which they really I mean, those people at the SABC don't – but would actually say what you think the show is, you know, why people should watch it.

University of Cape Town

APPENDIX THREE

Conversation with Rolanda Marais and Emma Holtmann

Tribeca Café, Rosebank, Johannesburg: November 2005.

Notes: Rolanda arranged to meet me in a coffee shop in Johannesburg that represents all that is elite about this city: it was situated next to the alternative Cinema Nouveau cinema in an upper-class, predominantly white suburb and boasted a range of expensive, imported coffees. We were surrounded by fashionable Johannesburg people sipping fancy, fashionable coffee. In her choice of coffee shop Rolanda revealed her own upper-class aspirations and her desire to be fashionable and stylish.

RM: I'm not in the third season of Zero Tolerance.

EH: My dissertation isn't on the third season either. It's about the first two and people's experiences of them. I've interviewed Hilary and Sara and they have offered to have me on set of the third season, but that's just for interest sake.

RM: You should go on set. It'd be really interesting. Because I came as a white, I'm Afrikaans and I grew up in a very white Afrikaans community. I went to UCT and I obviously got a lot of mixed cultures but still, Cape Town is still very European. And then I came here on set, the first day *HUH* almost the only white person, the entire crew was black and it was wonderful because it really opened my mind. I felt very self-conscious of my white skin the first day or two but after that I just forgot, which was very nice, quite an eye opener in a way because Cape Town is very closed. Johannesburg is so much more cosmopolitan but at the same time very African.

EH: How much of you is in Hannelie and how do you relate to her?

RM: Quite a bit, having told you just that I .. being a white ... I grew up in a small town which is almost like growing up on a farm, it's a farm community in Wellington and I know Hannelie's grown up on a farm. Very, very protective family, very Afrikaans, very nice parents and um, but I think she always knew about the outside world and she never wanted.. like her brother is still on the farm and she's always the one who wanted to leave and find more. So she went to the big city and started doing this investigation, also she's dating this coloured woman and also she's lesbian. I think I associate with her smalltown going to the big town, always wanting more ... like her parents and my parents are quite, not my parents as such but their friends and everything are very narrow-minded and black and white don't really mix. Hannelie's quite openminded and I think I'm also quite openminded in that

sense, there's no like white, black, brown even though I do come from where it's not really on for those people to mix. I'm not gay but I really can understand, for me it's really about being in love with a certain sex, it's about falling in love with a person, so I can understand that as well. And I'm so glad that I could represent that because normally I always get the parts of the 'poppie' or the romantic lead love-interest and this time it was almost like what is kind of seen as an underdog by some people, by the family and the office and also a lot of viewers watching it and I like that because it forces people to re-think their values and what they've been brought up with. And what I also like is the fact, the way I look, I'm very feminine and Hannelie's also quite feminine. She's not the typical, like butch-dyke like ... and I like that, I thought that was a very brave choice for them to make her completely Afrikaans, white and ... ja. And not really making an issue about the fact that she's gay.

EH: I'm interested where the space for that kind of representation comes from? one of the things that Sara said was that Hannelie became more central in the second season because of you and the interesting things that came out of your work with the character. Would you say that's a fair assessment? She said she didn't consciously choose to represent gay women in a positive way.

RM: I think it's got a lot to do with, as an actor if you get a character you put a lot of yourself in, you invest a lot of yourself and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't and I think with Hannelie it just worked. And I think having worked with wonderful directors like Sara and Hilary who are female, they kind of give you the freedom to do what you want. And I work from, I always work from the truth and always, always, always making everything as truthful as possible and I think maybe that also kind of fed or led Hannelie's character to be something a little bit more subtle, a character with a bigger emotional world than in the first season.

EH: And so your own history and your similarities made it possible to connect with her.

RM: Ja, I could understand her world. As opposed to playing hooker or a ... (laughs).

EH: People who I've spoken to have all said that the characters are very real. And how do people respond to you having played a gay character?

RM: I think a few, shame, I went to, I've got a lot of gay friends and we went to this gay club in Jo'burg, and shame this girl, shame, ja, she kind of, not harassed me but she was convinced that I was gay. And understandably so, I'm in a gay club and I find it ... I was saying to my friends at the time you know when I was playing Hannelie that there are a lot of gay female actresses who play these fictional straight parts and they would have been so great as Hannelie but they will never take on a gay role because they know it's a little bit of a taboo

still and its funny how straight people are playing gay and gay playing straight. It makes it easier, because it's too close to home for someone who knows the struggle so intensely of not being able to tell your parents or see your parents or those kind of things. I think it would have been just too close to home.

EH: So people didn't respond badly to it?

RM: No, not at all. The nice thing about it is they didn't go 'oh, now you're a gay, you're a *leti*, [lesbian] they just watch the show and they enjoy it. Maybe it's just the people I hang with. I think it's because it hasn't been sensationalised that people can't respond that way. It kind of, I imagine families watching it and they see these girls ... and it's just that they can't be uncomfortable it's not in their face.

...

RM: I don't have a lot of connection or a lot of, I don't talk to a lot of the fans or the people who relate to the show but I think it must have been incredibly empowering for people sitting in Soweto watching .. these girls who are at highschool or deciding if they wanna go to school or highschool. I think it must have been quite inspirational and I'm sure it changed quite a lot of viewers' perception of equality and what a female is and could be and what it doesn't necessarily have to be. Especially in these communities where the husbands are the ones who make the money and who have especially the intellectual power.

EH: Denzela certainly is a powerful character.

RM: It's intimidating, especially for the male, um, chauvinistic, um ...

EH: Denzela does come from an elite background. That's why I'm interviewing the cops as well, to try and find out what the meaning is of these characters in the world of special investigation units.

RM: Oh, are you interviewing cops as well?! What do they say?

EH: Lots of comments about the frustrations of investigation units and the misrepresentation of things. But it's also been surprising to hear, from (the head of the DSO in Gauteng) that most of the people in his unit don't watch the show.

RM: I think the interesting thing between Hannelie and Denzela, Denzela's much more aggressive, whereas Hannelie might know what she wants but she doesn't have the confidence to take what she wants.

...

EH: How much of Hilary and Sara are in Hannelie?

RM: Ja I think with the script, I can hear their voices in it, I can hear their voices, also from speaking to them and when they are directing, I think it's a female intuition thing. When they give you a note it's not just a note, you can see it comes from their world.

EH: What parts of Hannelie do you carry with you?

RM: It's very funny because my everyday life and the way I think are integrated with my character and then I can't differentiate between what is my life and what is my character. I think we both grew at the same time, Rolanda grew up together with the Hannelie character. And you always take so much with you from a show that you work on. Like I remember the episode where I had to go back to my parents for my brother's wedding and I couldn't tell my parents I had a girlfriend. And that affected me quite badly because I would like to tell my parents everything, especially about someone who makes me happy and someone I care about. But Hannelie couldn't do that. So I kept on wondering, what if it was me, what if I was in that situation, how would I ... would I have not said anything or would I. So I went through these moments when I kind of judged Hannelie and thought 'just tell them' but at the same time understanding completely the world her parents come from and they will not and cannot understand where she's coming from. Representing something that, in this country is not yet or not accepted is a huge responsibility and that's what I realised ... representing that made me ... a bit scared but at the same time quite excited to show the country that it's normal, it's just normal and it's human and it's about love and it's not about colour. I felt quite proud. When the auditions happened a lot of actresses didn't wanna play a gay character. I thought that was the most exciting thing about it, to bring a voice to ... a lot of people in this country are gay and can't say or do anything.

EH: So there was a bit of an activist intention for you? Because Sara said it wasn't an intentionally activist thing on her part.

RM: I liked that because it makes it less of an issue ...

EH: Why a homosexual character?

RM: I think because we all have a lot of gay friends and it's very present in our lives but something that's incredibly silent on the TV and I think maybe not consciously but unconsciously ... it's kind of representing ... they might not say so, but I think that Sara's very cleverly pc-oriented. You've got your black, your coloured, your women and men and you obviously have to have your gay. Without really pushing any of them. Having it present but using everyday, well not everyday but crime scenes and those kind of scenarios to work it out, ja. But I also think Hilary and Sara grew up very liberal, I think for them, more so than for the rest of South Africans, it's not really the issue, it's just the background. Every

writer and every creative, anyone who has a creative input have a certain idea about what, or they're quite judgemental about this or that.

EH: Your parents and your background? There's no space for gayness there?

RM: Oh no, there is. I'm blessed to have uh... quite liberal parents. My father's a minister in the NG Kerk ... and I've always had gay friends and they just stimulate me more. And now my dad had to, you know there's this whole gay issue in the NG Kerk and he had to do a preek about it and he went and spoke to one of my gay friends about it. So he's very open about it, I think because he's been exposed to it through me, while his colleagues haven't. You know they watch Zero Tolerance, but for them, because it's a kind of English series and it's something that's out of their comfort zone, out of their familiarity. When I did a bit of 7de Laan and they thought 'wow, I'm so successful and I'm so famous and everything is great'. But they never quite understood Zero Tolerance. She would tape it for me to watch, but then she would tape 7de Laan over it ... so while it might not be relevant I think it's necessary for them to watch and learn from.

...

RM: I don't like ... I like being safe but I don't like being too safe. I like challenging people and I like being challenged by people ... I love the intertextual conversations that all my work has with each other ...

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